



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS
TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS
MARCH 24, 2026**

Good morning Chair Sanchez and members of the Committee on Housing and Buildings. I am Ahmed Tigani, Commissioner for the New York City Department of Buildings (“the Department”). I am joined today by Yegal Shamash, First Deputy Commissioner, Gina Ugarte, Deputy Commissioner for Finance, and other members of the Department’s leadership team. We are pleased to be here to discuss the fiscal year 2027 preliminary budget, as well as the Department’s performance and priority initiatives.

Introduction

It is a privilege to be back at the Department after serving New Yorkers for five years at the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (“HPD”) in various roles, where we focused on delivering for New Yorkers by preserving and creating housing.

Continuing this work in a new capacity is a responsibility I take seriously. As part of the Housing and Planning portfolio under Deputy Mayor Leila Bozorg, the Department supports the construction sector, prepares for emergencies, serves communities that depend on our development and enforcement work, and partners with industries that deliver schools, grocery stores, and hospitals. This shift reinforces our central role in preserving and creating housing at a moment of urgent need, while maintaining our commitment across all workstreams. We will hold owners accountable for maintaining safe buildings and use every available tool when they fail to meet their legal obligations. At the same time, we are streamlining processes to remove bottlenecks that delay development, especially for affordable housing, and are working closely with the Mayor’s Office and partner agencies to advance the city’s housing plan and key initiatives outlined by Mayor Mamdani.

While we are excited to be at the table on all things housing, central to our mission is the safety of those who live, visit, or work in New York City. We will continue to monitor the existing building stock for compliance, to respond to complaints and emergencies, and to make sure that construction sites are employing safe work practices, but we are also focused on using our data to identify issues before they arise. As I will discuss later on in my testimony, we are moving forward with taking a proactive approach to building safety, which will complement our complaint-based approach. Safety needs to be at the center of everything we do to maintain our buildings, whether we are discussing housing or storage facilities, and is key to making the process of growing this city's physical footprint viable to support the needs of New Yorkers across the five boroughs.

While I may be at the helm of this great agency, none of what I will discuss today would be possible without the talent and expertise of the 1,634 individuals that makeup the Department. I am blown away by the progress the agency has made since I was last here and I would like to specifically recognize some of my colleagues, who are leading the charge on transforming the agency and keeping us safe.

Olga Suto, who has been with the agency for 13 years, is our Assistant Commissioner for Existing Buildings Compliance. In this role, Olga is key to keeping our buildings safe. Olga oversees a team dedicated to the structural integrity of the built environment, which includes overseeing the myriad maintenance requirements building owners must comply with, including those that relate to facades, parking structures, and retaining walls, responding to crisis, tackling the issue of longstanding sidewalk sheds, and moving the agency forward by utilizing predictive enforcement to keep buildings safe.

Tarek Khalil, who has been with the agency 9 years, is our Assistant Commissioner for Mechanical and Plumbing Inspections. Tarek's team is dedicated to building systems, including elevators, boilers, and mechanical systems, which are building systems that we rely on every day. They have been key to the implementation of Local Law 152 of 2016, which requires that a large portion of our building stock undergoes regular inspections of their gas piping systems, which has been a herculean effort. Tarek takes a thoughtful approach to the regulations that govern their work and constantly finds way to find efficiencies and to modernize.

Finally, I would like to take a moment to recognize **Chief Richard Bower**, who passed away last week. Chief Bower served the Department with dedication for 18 years in various roles, where they put safety first as they rose through our ranks, including as part of the Excavation, Interior Demolition, and Construction Safety Engineering teams. My condolences go out to their loved ones.

Fiscal Year 2027 Preliminary Budget

Thank you. At this time, I'd like to move on to discuss the budget that supports this important work. The fiscal year 2027 preliminary budget allocates approximately \$214 million in expense funds to the Department. Of this funding, approximately \$181 million (85%) is for personal services, which supports 1,864 budgeted positions, and \$33 million (15%) is for other than personal services, which primarily supports contractual services, equipment, and supplies. This funding is critical to supporting the Department's mandates and priorities. Of note, the Department has received 23 additional positions to support the implementation of local laws passed by the City Council last year, which give the Department additional enforcement tools to get sidewalk sheds down faster and 13 additional positions to increase staffing associated with conducting background checks for the trades the Department licenses. These new positions will be funded by fees the Department is introducing or increasing by rule.

As of today, the Department's budgeted headcount is 1,853 and our actual headcount as of January ending is 1,635. Our budgeted headcount includes additional staffing received in recent plans, which includes positions to establish a proactive enforcement program, to enforce Local Law 152 of 2016, which requires that buildings undergo periodic gas piping inspections, and to support increased development activity, which includes positions related to City of Yes for Housing Opportunity and basement legalization. While we have 218 actual vacancies, we have 55 candidates in the hiring pipeline, which includes 41 inspectors, which leaves us with 163 actual vacancies or a vacancy rate around 9%. We are actively recruiting to fill these vacancies, including the positions we received in the preliminary budget to support priority initiatives, including reducing sidewalk sheds, and look forward to keeping you updated on our efforts.

Supporting and Streamlining Development

In fiscal year 2025, the last full fiscal year, approximately 275,000 construction jobs were filed with the Department, and we issued approximately 169,000 initial and renewal construction permits combined, which is consistent with the activity we saw in the previous fiscal year. So far this fiscal year, we are seeing a slight increase in construction job filings and a slight decrease in permit issuance. As it relates to service levels, I will focus on service levels concerning job filings submitted through DOB NOW, which represent about 95% of all job filings as we continue to transition to the DOB NOW system. On average, for all job filings submitted through DOB NOW, it is taking the Department about 5 days to complete its first review, which is an increase over 3.5 days during the same time period last fiscal year. Of note, during this time period, we received about 2,500 more resubmissions, including for more complex new building and demolition projects, which means the plans came back to us for review more than once, and in about 650 additional instances our customers opted to have us conduct full plan examination over professionally certifying their job filings. Combined, these factors account for the uptick in our service levels for plan examination.

The wait time between a construction inspection request and an inspection, which occurs after a construction project is completed by a contractor, has remained at 4 days for construction inspections, has remained at about 9 days for an electrical inspection, which is down from nearly 13 days from full fiscal year 2025, and has increased by about 2 days to 6 days for a plumbing inspection. With respect to electrical inspections, it should be noted that there has been an increased demand for electrical inspections, which could be attributed to electrification projects. At the end of last year, the City Council passed a law, sponsored by Chair Sanchez, Local Law 42 of 2026, which will allow for electrical inspections to be self-certified, which is allowed for other trades. These changes will help improve service levels as it relates to electrical inspections as the demand for an inspection from the Department will decrease. Overall, there has been an increased demand for development inspections and a reduction in the use of overtime to support such inspections. The Department reduced its overtime spending by \$5.6 million since fiscal year 2024, which is 60% reduction.

We will continue to identify ways to not only support, but also streamline development projects. We are investing in our most important resource, our people. We are working on establishing a plan examination training academy for the first time, with a comprehensive curriculum and ongoing training on changes to the vast regulatory landscape we are charged with enforcing, which will be similar to our existing inspector training academy. We are also looking to technology to help support our work. We continue to work with the Partnership Fund for New York City on the Buildings Tech Lab, a public-private initiative to find, evaluate, and test innovative technology solutions that will support our work, including to make plan reviews, permitting, and inspections more efficient. We will soon be starting pilot programs with five companies, which will come at no cost to the Department, and are in the process of identifying additional companies to work with in the near future. The Department is appreciative of the Partnership's support with this effort and looks forward to working with the companies that have been selected to incorporate innovative technologies into our work, with the goal of working more efficiently. Finally, we are working closely with the Mayor's Office and our partner agencies on an interagency task force, Streamlining Procedures to Expedite Equitable Development ("SPEED") to accelerate affordable housing production. The Mayor's Office will soon be releasing recommendations related to this effort.

Building and Construction Safety

While the Department's enforcement has largely been driven by complaints in the past, we continue to conduct proactive inspections at larger construction sites and began conducting proactive inspections of existing buildings last fiscal year, work which was made possible by Local Law 79 of 2024, which was also sponsored by Chair Sanchez, which tasked the Department with establishing a proactive enforcement program. While our efforts were focused on recruiting to fill the 60 positions we received to support this program, which includes inspectors, plan examiners, data analysts, and attorneys, we have now begun this work. Since we began conducting proactive inspections last March, we have conducted approximately 9,200 inspections that have resulted in the issuance of 7,000 summonses, which includes follow up inspections following the issuance of Class 1 summonses until such summonses are corrected and inspections of potentially at-risk

buildings, which are identified and assigned a risk score through data analytics. Proactive inspections made up approximately 30% of the 190,000 enforcement inspections we conducted last fiscal year. From experience, we know that proactive inspections keep the public, including construction workers, safe. As it relates to construction sites, between fiscal year 2024 and fiscal year 2025, we continued to see a reduction in construction-related injuries, with construction-related injuries dropping by 42% from 625 to 363. We urge the industry to continue working safely and to ensure that workers are appropriately trained. We will soon be implementing a new local law, Local Law 10 of 2026, sponsored by Council Member Lee, that will add to the existing site safety training program, which will require that workers receive training on mental health awareness, which will cover suicide prevention and substance awareness. We look forward to keeping you updated on this important work.

As it relates to our complaint-driven enforcement, we receive about 100,000 311 complaints each year. The most serious complaints, which are those that relate to conditions that may present an immediate threat to the public are classified as priority “A” and are responded to within hours. However, our service levels for other complaints have increased, including for priority “B” complaints, which capture violating conditions that if occurring, while serious, do not present an immediate threat to the public. So far this fiscal year, we are responding to these complaints in 21 days, which is an increase over 15 days during the same time period last fiscal year. As with development inspections, this increase can be attributed to existing vacancies, which we are recruiting for, and to a reduction in overtime use. Of note, elevator-related complaints have driven this increase as well given the reduced capacity of the elevator unit that responds to such complaints. To address this issue, we have launched a pilot program that allows for third-party inspections following elevator work in a building, which frees up our inspectorial resources to respond to complaints from the public. The inspections must be conducted and witnessed by qualified individuals that are licensed by the Department. This program has been well received by the industry and we are closely monitoring it.

Sustainability

As it relates to sustainability, the Department is responsible for implementing and enforcing a number of sustainable buildings laws. This includes Local Law 97 of 2019, which requires the city's largest buildings to increase energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions over several compliance periods, culminating in achieving net zero emissions by 2050. Our sustainability team has worked diligently to implement this important law, including promulgating rules, conducting outreach with our agency partners, and issuing guidance to inform property owners and the industry about how to comply with the law. We have also hired a dedicated team to focus on implementation and enforcement concerning the law. Last year, we achieved a major milestone as building owners were required to submit compliance reports to the Department for the first time. We saw very high engagement rates for the first compliance cycle, but know that building owners have a lot of work to do to come into compliance with the 2030 emissions targets and are prepared to support them with that work. In addition, the Department enforces the Energy Code and existing laws that require certain buildings to report their energy and water use, post energy grades, upgrade lighting and install submetering, and perform energy audits and retro-commissioning. Concerning the Energy Code, we worked with the City Council on Local Law 47 of 2026 late last year, which was also sponsored by the Chair, and which resulted in the 2025 Energy Code. We will begin enforcing the new Energy Code later this month.

Improving Quality of Life for New Yorkers

We are also taking steps to continue to improve quality of life for New Yorkers, which includes tenants, business owners, and other members of the public.

As it relates to tenants, we are proud to be participating in the Renter Ripoff hearings the Mayor's Office is hosting and look forward to working on new initiatives to support tenants that will come out of that effort. This builds on our work to protect tenants in occupied buildings under construction. We have multiple teams dedicated to tenant protection, including our Office of the Tenant Advocate, that intakes complaints and fields inquiries directly from members of the public, including addressing concerns related to required tenant protection plans, and our Real Time Enforcement Unit, which responds to complaints concerning unpermitted work in multiple dwellings expeditiously. Finally, we continue to participate in the Tenant Harassment Prevention

Task Force, which includes conducting regular multi-agency inspections with our partner agencies in the interest of protecting and improving conditions for tenants.

As it relates to business owners, we have a dedicated small business team that provides one-on-one guidance to businesses, including conducting plan reviews for job filings submitted in connection with their business. We encourage small businesses to contact the small business team to receive assistance before they begin a construction project or at any time during a project should they have any questions. We also took steps during the last administration to improve the regulatory environment for small businesses, including extending cure periods for all Class 2 and Class 3 violations to 60 days and doing away with the \$6,000 work without a permit penalty that was imposed by the Department on small businesses.

Finally, we are continuing to focus on reducing sidewalk sheds throughout the city, with a focus on sheds that are up at buildings where no active construction work is occurring. Since we began this effort in 2023, there has been about a 15% reduction in the number of sidewalk sheds citywide, which benefits the public, including businesses that are negatively impacted by sidewalk sheds. We recently implemented a 90-day permit duration for sidewalk shed permits, which will require that building owners renew their sidewalk shed permits more regularly and report their progress to repair façade conditions to the Department during such renewals. Where a building owner does not make progress, we will use every enforcement tool at our disposal to prompt repair work, which includes new enforcement tools we will be implementing later this year and taking legal action against the worst offenders. We have also made tremendous progress reviewing the Local Law 11 program, which requires certain buildings to undergo façade inspections periodically. We issued a report late last year, which includes recommendations made by our consultant, Thornton Tomasetti. Based on their recommendations and regulatory changes made by the City Council last year, we expect buildings to go longer without having their façades inspected, without sacrificing safety. Finally, we know there are sidewalk sheds that will continue to be needed in conjunction with new building construction, demolition projects, and façade maintenance. Late last year we released six new shed designs, which are more aesthetically pleasing, which will improve the look and feel of the public realm. We expect to make these new designs available for use by the public through rulemaking later this year.

In closing, at the start of a new administration, we are building the foundation for a renewed vision for our city. The Department of Buildings will continue to evolve through community input and internal innovation, but our core commitments to customer service, accountability, safety, ingenuity, and inclusive growth will remain constant. These principles will guide and support everything we do moving forward. We look forward to working with the City Council and community leaders to bring this vision to life. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and we welcome your questions.



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DINA LEVY
Commissioner

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

FY 2026 Preliminary Budget Hearing

March 24, 2026

Opening

Chair Sanchez, Chair Lee, members of the Committee, thank you for having me today. It is a privilege to be here for the first time as the new Commissioner of HPD.

I have been working in affordable housing for many years, but a few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to hear testimony directly from tenants at the Rental Ripoff hearings in the Bronx and in Queens.

Several of the residents I met came from buildings where I had been a community organizer more than 20 years ago.

It was striking, that despite the passage of so much time, the same groups of landlords were being called out, and the tenants' stories were basically unchanged.

Refusals to make repairs, overcharges on rent, and disregard for tenant safety. It has been more than two decades, and yet there are a small group of landlords who continue to wreak havoc on a new generation of tenants.

My takeaway was clear. We need to do better.

We must be the ones to end this cycle, to ensure that future generations of tenants will not have the same stories to tell 20 years from now. This will not be my only priority while leading HPD. But it will serve as a daily reminder for how I plan to approach this work.

When it is clear that our strategies are not working, we have to change course.

We need to remind ourselves that there is urgency to our work. And we cannot let the shortcoming of our past limit our vision for what is possible for our future.

A New Era in Tackling the Housing Crisis

I have held this position for little more than ten weeks. But in that short time, I have marveled at what this agency accomplishes every day and at the incredible potential that lies ahead

Already several key priorities have come into focus.

First, we must build more housing – across every neighborhood, in every borough and we must do so at a faster pace. It will take a multi-pronged approach: bringing all parties to the table—labor, tenants, developers, and the Council—who must work together to build housing faster, more cost effectively and without compromising quality or safety.

Second, we must preserve and stabilize the existing affordable stock. We will not build our way out of this crisis if we do not preserve and protect the affordable housing that already exists. We must tackle rising expenses and find additional ways to assist tenants in making sure they can afford their rent.

Third, we must fix what is within our reach. Whether that’s how we contract and pay our non-profit partners or how we handle marketing and lease ups, we know that these problems are fixable and they are within our control. Where there are duplicative steps, we will eliminate them and where we have let government make things too complicated, we will find ways to simplify.

Finally, we must do more to protect our residents. HPD will use its entire array of enforcement tools to put willful bad actors out of business, once and for all. We will empower tenants to be our partners in code enforcement, and we will create avenues to connect well-intentioned landlords and homeowners to the resources they need to succeed.

HPD Budget Overview

I believe that these goals are achievable, but we are sober about the current climate we are in.

Federal funding is under attack. Construction prices have skyrocketed, and operating expenses are strangling property owners. The Mamdani administration has inherited a difficult financial situation, and a staffing shortage due to the last administration’s hiring freeze. That is the environment we are in — and it is hard reality.

HPD’s total expense budget under the Fiscal Year 2027 Preliminary Plan is just over \$1.4 billion. Nearly three-quarters of that funding comes from the federal government through Section 8, CDBG, and HOME.

Our federal funding is irreplaceable, and it must be maintained.

On the capital side, our current budget for FY 2027 is just over \$2.9 billion, \$1.9 billion for our direct pipeline, and a Ten-Year Plan totaling \$22.6 billion.

Behind all of our work, there are roughly 2,400 people, our staff, who show up every day to do this work with dedication and determination. T

That includes 345 staffers on our development teams. 324 code inspectors out in the field. And 421 public servants connecting New Yorkers to housing and rental assistance.

HPD has 431 open positions right now — a 15% vacancy rate. We are actively working to meet our vacancy target, at which point we will no longer be subject to the 2-1 hiring freeze, offering us a renewed path forward.

Creating More Affordable Housing

And despite these very real challenges— the teams at HPD continue to deliver for New Yorkers every day.

In calendar year 2025, HPD financed or supported the creation and preservation of almost 30,000 affordable homes, including more than 13,000 newly constructed units through our capital and tax incentive programs.

This includes construction starts of 1,900 units of supportive housing, and more than 2,500 units that serve extremely low-income households.

With respect to as of right programs, 485-x is now operational, and we have 188 projects in our pipeline.

And under the Universal Affordability Preference we have already closed on more than 1300 units.

We continue to advance homeownership particularly in under-served communities.

Through our Homeowner Help Desk we have connected New Yorkers to critical resources like our HomeFirst Down Payment Assistance program and our HomeFix rehabilitation program.

We've reached nearly 9,000 people, provided assistance to 2,900 homeowners and stabilized 471 families.

We are also carrying out Mayor Mamdani directive to use our public land for public good. Since 2014, HPD has financed construction of 26,000 new homes on public land.

And through the Mayor's Executive Order 4, agencies across the city will identify public sites to support an additional 25,000 new homes over the next ten years.

We must continue to expand our development capacity and make sure that every neighborhood in every borough is building their fair share of affordable housing. I

n partnership with DCP we will be putting forward the Fair Housing Framework and our strategic equity analysis, to assess housing needs across the city, and to name specific production targets for every community district.

Preservation and Stabilization

At the same time, we are mindful of the need to increase our preservation efforts. This will also require multiple strategies.

We know that responsible landlords are struggling and we must address the challenges related to rising expenses, particularly insurance, and the need to improve rent collection.

We know that most often when a tenant does not pay their rent, it is because they simply do not have the means.

We must do more to intervene early and connect residents with resources to ensure the stability of our citizens and our housing stock.

In 2025 we preserved over 16,000 affordable homes.

Over the past 10 years we have invested \$1.1 Billion to preserve our Mitchell Lama housing, and we are currently working with 15 Mitchell Lama projects to provide financial restructuring and major capital improvements.

We know there is more to do here, and we are actively looking at ways to increase our preservation efforts for our 92 Mitchell Lama projects.

Through the ANCP program, there are 40 resident-controlled cooperatives now under active construction, putting the promise of homeownership finally within reach.

There are still 64 buildings totaling just over 1,100 units under City ownership, and we are working to find ways to move these projects to closing more quickly.

We know they have waited long enough.

And finally, we are actively working with our colleagues at HDC and the Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants to identify interventions to preserve our privately owned rent-stabilized stock, particularly those in physical and financial distress.

Whether through intervening in bankruptcy and foreclosure proceedings — as we did in the Pinnacle case — or by bringing aggressive legal action to stop harassment and disinvestment — as we did in the A&E portfolio — this administration will ensure that rent-stabilized tenants get the protections and the housing they deserve.

Connecting New Yorkers to Homes

We are also deeply committed to improving how New Yorkers get connected to the housing that we create.

Through our rental assistance programs, HPD administers subsidies to more than 44,000 households every year.

Last fiscal year, HPD connected over 10,000 households to affordable homes through our Housing Connect lottery system — and we moved more than 4,600 households out of shelter through our homeless set-aside program – a 15% increase over the prior year.

For each of those families, it may mean a shorter commute, a bedroom of their own, a place where they can finally exhale.

But these improvements are not sufficient, and we plan to revamp both our housing lottery and our homeless placement systems.

Incremental fixes here will not go far enough. We are taking a hard look at every part of the process, and if necessary, we will migrate to a more efficient and nimble system.

Protecting Tenants

Finally, we are committed to redoubling our efforts to ensure that tenants are protected once inside their homes.

In the last fiscal year, HPD's enforcement team issued over 870,000 code violations, initiated or joined more than 12,000 legal actions and resolved more than 22,000 code violations through comprehensive litigation.

We spent \$25 million on Emergency Repairs impacting more than 177,000 units of housing; and we discharged 199 buildings from the Alternative Enforcement Program.

With regard to tenant harassment, in FY 2025 we completed 1,000 site visits at almost 600 buildings and initiated 25 court cases related to those inspections.

Through our Partners in Preservation program, we support a network of grassroots community groups who have knocked on 21,000 doors in distressed buildings and organized new tenant associations in 86 properties.

And we are collaborating with Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants, with whom we share a vision for how organized residents can play a critical role in improving our code enforcement, and serve as a primary partner to local government in holding landlords accountable.

I would like to add that we know the overwhelming majority of property owners and managers in this city are working in good faith, that they care about their tenants, and that they are important partners for our agency.

But for the small group of landlords who have willfully ignored the law for decades, functioning in essence as professional slum lords, I would like to make sure that our message today is clear. Their time is up.

Closing

In closing, I would like to reiterate my admiration for the incredible staff at HPD and the magnitude of work they have accomplished during very difficult times.

It will be my honor to work alongside them as we set out to achieve the affordable housing goals laid out by the new Mayor.

Getting there will be hard, but our marching orders are clear – we have been tasked with realizing an affordability agenda for City of New York.

That mandate begins with the recognition that all New Yorkers are entitled to a decent, safe and affordable place to call home.

I look forward to building a strong partnership with the members of this Council and to working collaboratively to achieve our shared goals.

I thank you for the opportunity to present here today and I am happy to answer your questions.

Thank you.



JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS

**TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS
TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING & BUILDINGS
MARCH 24, 2026**

Good morning,

My name is Jumaane D. Williams and I am the Public Advocate for the City of New York. I want to thank Chair Sanchez, as well as the members of the Committee on Housing and Buildings, for holding this hearing today and allowing me the opportunity to testify.

Like much of the U.S., New York City faces a deeply concerning housing affordability crisis. Coming off the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw the sunset of the eviction moratorium and a funding cliff for emergency rental assistance, our housing agencies faced high attrition rates with the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) seeing a peak of almost 300 job separations in 2022.¹ Similarly, the Department of Buildings (DOB) saw an attrition peak of 223 during the same year.² With this in mind, I am concerned by some of the cuts in the proposed FY27 preliminary budget. While DOB sees very little change with a decrease of \$18 million from the modified FY26 budget, HPD's expense funding sees a \$500 million decrease from the FY26 budget as modified and a \$395 million reduction from the FY26 budget as adopted.³ While we understand that the city faces a budget crisis, we must grapple with the reality of what these cuts entail, especially as we grapple with the uncertainty of federal funds. I look forward to hearing more from HPD where this reduction comes from and how it will affect the work of the agency.

In the same breath, as we consider the budget crisis left to us by the previous administration, we have to look at CityFHEPS, the City Fighting Homelessness and Eviction Prevention Supplement. This rental assistance program has been a critical tool in keeping families housed and preventing evictions but over the past six years, costs for the program have risen fivefold

¹ ["2024 Update on New York City Staffing Trends". Office of the NYS Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli.](#)

² [Ibid.](#)

³ ["February 2026 Budget Function Analysis." NYC Office of Management and Budget.](#)



JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS

since the initial \$25 million investment in 2019.⁴ The Mayor's \$1.64 billion investment in the program is a slight increase from last year's \$1.25 billion, yet as advocates have cited, this number also falls short of the expanded eligibility costs passed by the City Council in 2023.⁵ The underbudgeting of the CityFHEPS program by nearly \$800 million under the Adams administration, is the single largest contributor to the \$2.2 budget shortfall the city faces.⁶ While I believe we must expand CityFHEPS and move away from costly shelters, I also recognize that in the short-term we have a budget that the city is legally obligated to balance, so I look forward to working with the Mayor, City Council, and the Comptroller, to balance these varying needs.

Finally, I want to recognize our partners on the federal level, because without their advocacy, New York State and the city at large would be in a much worse fiscal state without the federal appropriations bill that recently passed, funding Section 8 vouchers. In dire times like these, it is critical that city, state and federal officials work together to protect our communities and mitigate the harms being inflicted by the Trump administration.

Thank you.

⁴ [Russo-Lennon, Barbara. "Dozens rally at City Hall after Mamdani backtracks on CityFHEPS voucher promise – leaving housing advocates feeling 'betrayed'". *AMNY*. March 2026.](#)

⁵ [Spauster, Patrick. "Can Mamdani Afford to Expand the CityFHEPS Voucher Program?" *City Limits*. January 2026.](#)

⁶ Ibid.



CB11M

EAST HARLEM

Adem Brija
Chair

Angel D. Mescain
District Manager

**Testimony to the New York City Council
Committee on Housing & Buildings
Hearing on the Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2027
March 24, 2026**

Good evening and thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is Beverly Pabon, and I am testifying on behalf of Community Board 11 regarding our FY2027 housing capital and expense priorities. East Harlem continues to face some of the most severe housing pressures in New York City, and our FY27 requests reflect the urgent, structural needs that must be addressed to stabilize this community.

Our capital requests—311202720C through 311202723C—focus on the preservation of existing affordable housing, especially City-owned and long-neglected buildings. Many of these properties require full rehabilitation of core building systems: roofs, boilers, electrical upgrades, fire safety improvements, and façade repairs. These are not cosmetic needs. They are essential life-safety investments that prevent displacement, protect long-term residents, and keep deeply affordable units online in a neighborhood where affordability is rapidly eroding.

We are particularly concerned about buildings in the former TIL pipeline and other small multifamily properties that have endured decades of deferred maintenance.

Our capital requests—311202720C through 311202723C—received a mix of agency responses, including “supports and can accommodate,” “supports but cannot accommodate,” and in some cases, “the request has already been completed.”

These responses require clarification. When an agency says it supports and can accommodate, we need to know what portion of the request is being accommodated, on what timeline, and with what funding source. When an agency says it supports but cannot accommodate, we need to understand what barriers exist—budgetary, operational, or statutory—and what steps would allow the request to move forward. And when an agency states that a request has been completed, we ask for documentation of completion and confirmation that the underlying need has truly been resolved.

These capital requests focus on the preservation of existing affordable housing, especially City owned and long neglected buildings. These are essential life safety investments that prevent displacement and protect long-term residents.

Without capital intervention, these buildings risk further vacancy, loss of units, and in some cases, permanent removal from the affordable housing stock. East Harlem cannot afford to lose a single unit.

Our expense requests—311202733E through 311202737E—addresses the operational supports that keep residents safely housed. These include expanded tenant legal services, enhanced code enforcement, proactive inspections for buildings with chronic violations, and increased funding for emergency repairs. We also call for strengthened homelessness prevention and aftercare services, recognizing that East Harlem has one of the highest shelter entry rates in Manhattan.

Our expense requests—311202733E through 311202737E—also received mixed responses, and again, we need more detail. If an agency supports but cannot accommodate an expense request, we need to know whether the barrier is staffing, funding, or program design, and what the City can do to remove those barriers. If an expense request is marked as completed, we ask for verification and clarity on whether the service level matches the need in East Harlem.

These expense items—tenant legal services, proactive code enforcement, emergency repairs, and homelessness prevention—are the frontline tools that keep residents housed. And also the frontline tools that prevent eviction, stabilize vulnerable households, and ensure that landlords meet their obligations. Without them, the capital investments we are requesting cannot succeed.

East Harlem has long carried a disproportionate share of the city's housing burden. We have welcomed supportive housing and shelters, at levels far exceeding most districts. But we cannot continue to absorb new obligations while our existing housing stock deteriorates and our residents face escalating displacement pressures.

The FY27 capital and expense requests before you represent a balanced, responsible, and necessary approach: to preserve what we have, repair what the City owns, protect tenants from preventable displacement, and invest in the long-term stability of East Harlem families.

I/We urge the City to fully fund these requests and to provide clear, written explanations for all agency responses so that CB11 can accurately track progress, identify gaps, and advocate effectively for our community

East Harlem has done its part for decades. It is time for the City to do the same to participate in housing our neighbors.

Thank you.

Beverly Pabon
Vice Chair, Housing Committee
mn11@cb.nyc.gov



NYSFAH Testimony
New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings
FY2027 Preliminary Budget Hearing
Submitted: March 25, 2026

Dear Members of the Committee:

The New York State Association for Affordable Housing (NYSFAH) represents nonprofit and for-profit developers, owners, and managers who create and preserve affordable housing across the five boroughs. We submit this testimony regarding the FY2027 preliminary budget as it relates to the Department of Housing Preservation and Development.

New York City faces two interconnected housing challenges: we need to build more units to address the supply shortage, and we need to preserve the affordable housing we already have. The upcoming housing plan must address both. For preservation to succeed, we must also reduce operating costs, administrative burden, and unnecessary delays that drain resources from buildings and the agencies that oversee them. Today, we focus on the urgent needs of the existing stock through the C.R.I.S.I.S. agenda, a set of preservation priorities developed in coordination with our partners in the affordable housing provider community.

C.R.I.S.I.S. Agenda Priorities

- Create a \$1 billion loan workout and reserve replenishment fund for affordable housing buildings under regulatory agreement with HPD that are at risk of default.
- Raise revenue by allowing vacancies to comply with current AMI rent limits in 100 percent income-restricted affordable housing buildings.
- Increase capacity for loan restructuring on a portfolio basis at HPD for preservation finance and asset management.
- Staff DSS adequately to ensure New Yorkers access and retain affordable housing through timely processing of rental assistance and homeless referrals.
- Invest in a municipally backed affordable housing insurance program to lower premiums for HPD-financed buildings.
- Save money on water bills by expanding the Multi-family Water Assistance Program to \$100 million and increasing the per-unit discount to \$500.

Addressing Cumulative Budget Pressures

We also ask the Committee to consider the cumulative impact of recent housing policies on HPD's budget. A combination of recently enacted mandates has added significant new cost burdens to affordable housing development, totaling approximately \$1 billion in additional annual costs. Without corresponding budget increases, these new costs will inevitably reduce

the amount of new development and preservations deals while also slowing the pace of existing deals in the pipeline. The result will be delays in new inventory and fewer units overall.

We share the Council's goals of creating quality jobs, and we look forward to partnering with the City on expanding homeownership opportunities. However, when new requirements are added without corresponding budget increases, they put the Mayor's and Council's housing goals further out of reach.

We look forward to working with the Council and the Administration on solutions that preserve what we have and build what we need.

Respectfully submitted,

Irak Cehonski-Rivas
NYC Policy Director
Contact: irak@nysafah.org

Testimony of the New York Housing Conference

New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings

Testimony

March 24, 2026

Good afternoon. My name is Brendan Cheney. I am Director of Policy and Operations at the New York Housing Conference (NYHC). I would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to testify about the FY 2027 preliminary budget.

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

There are three main issues we are testifying about today: ensuring sufficient capital resources for affordable housing production; the distressing CRISIS in affordable housing we are witnessing; and the pressing need for reforms to improve efficiency in housing production.

First, while we look forward to the Mamdani Administration's new affordable housing plan later this spring, we want to highlight that as it stands, the housing capital budget is currently facing a fiscal cliff. The FY2026 capital budget for the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) is \$5.9 billion. In FY 2027 this drops to less than \$3 billion and in the following years is less than \$2 billion. We estimate the agency needs at least \$4 billion per year to maintain historical production, adhere to the recently passed Construction Justice Act, while also adding capital funding to ensure we are fully utilizing expanded Low Income Housing Tax Credits. This estimate does not include an additional \$1b needed annually to support NYCHA's PACT program funded through HPD's capital budget.

We anticipate the Mayor's executive budget will be updated in alignment with a new housing plan. There is a desperate need to expand housing and ensure affordable housing is in all neighborhoods. NYHC's [New York City Housing Tracker](#) shows that affordable housing is spread unevenly throughout the city; over the past 11 1/2 years, 13 districts have produced more than 4,000 units of new affordable housing, while 10 districts have produced fewer than 300 units of new affordable housing over that time. We urge the City Council to work in tandem with the Administration to prioritize the forecasted gap in their budget negotiations over the next few months.

Second, there is a growing crisis of financial distress in affordable housing – many HPD-financed affordable housing buildings are struggling to cover growing operating costs with insufficient revenue. A [recent study by Enterprise Community Partners and LISC](#) found more than half of the 428 projects in their portfolios (totaling 37,130 units) have negative cash flow. While this problem has been slowly brewing since 2020, an urgent response is now required.

The city must meet this urgency by investing resources, staffing and policy reforms to aid buildings unable to meet the debt coverage ratios established by their lenders. Solutions must focus on aiding buildings at risk of default, increasing revenue in affordable housing buildings and decreasing expenses. As such, we are introducing the **C.R.I.S.I.S.** agenda - Affordable Housing Preservation Coalition priorities for the City Council and the Mamdani Administration to address operating deficits in affordable housing:

C.R.I.S.I.S. Agenda

- **C**reate \$1b loan workout & reserve replenishment fund for affordable housing buildings under regulatory agreement with NYC HPD at risk of default.
- **R**aise revenue by allowing vacancies to comply with current AMI rent limits in 100% income-restricted affordable housing buildings under regulatory agreement with NYC HPD or NYS HCR.
- **I**ncrease capacity for loan restructuring on a portfolio basis for preservation finance and asset management at NYC HPD to meet growing preservation needs.
- **S**taff NYC DSS adequately to ensure New Yorkers access and retain affordable housing by proactively preventing nonpayment evictions; supporting timely homeless set-aside referrals; and efficiently processing of CityFHEPs.
- **I**ncubate a municipally-backed affordable housing insurance program to lower premiums for HPD-financed buildings.
- **S**ave money on water bills in affordable housing by expanding the Multi-family Water Assistance Program to cover all affordable housing by budgeting \$100 million and increasing the per unit discount to \$500 per unit.

Third, bureaucratic issues that are dramatically limiting affordable housing development and operations will need to be addressed. The Mamdani Administration rightly created the SPEED Task Force to gather ideas for efficiency reforms for housing development and we were proud to be part of the process. Our recent reports tracked [delays in Housing Connect lease-ups](#), estimated the [costs of housing production delays](#), and the [excessive role of the Office of Management and Budget in affordable housing development](#).

We look forward to working with the City to approve and implement the suggestions that will accelerate up affordable housing development, vastly improve the Housing Connect lottery system, and speed up referrals to housing from shelters and rental assistance utilization.



**Testimony of Brianna Sturkey
on behalf of
the Disability Justice and
Environmental Justice Programs
at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
before the
Council of the City of New York
Committee on Housing and Buildings**

March 24, 2026

My name is Brianna Sturkey. I am a Pro Bono Scholar at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI). This testimony is on behalf of NYLPI's Disability Justice and Environmental Justice Programs.

NYLPI's Disability Justice Program assists New Yorkers with disabilities in matters involving housing discrimination, including requests for reasonable accommodations, such as apartment and common area retrofitting, transfers to accessible apartments, and protection for use of service animals. It is imperative that all New York City agencies ensure that housing is accessible and free of discrimination.

Although the federal [Fair Housing Act](#) was passed nearly 60 years ago, and New York City's and New York State's Human Rights Laws have likewise long been in effect, countless people in New York City continue to face discrimination when it comes to their housing needs. Consistent and aggressive enforcement of anti-discrimination laws allows more people with disabilities to remain in their homes. Our office has assisted countless people with disabilities who were living in untenable situations, merely because their landlords or managing agents refused to provide them with legally required reasonable accommodations.

New York City is a city that prides itself on the diversity of its people, and **we support all efforts to ensure that housing is accessible and otherwise free of discrimination, and that housing providers are held accountable for failing to adhere to non-discrimination mandates.** Enforcement of the accessibility requirements of New York City's Building Code should, therefore, also be a priority for the City, and **we urge City Council to fund aggressive enforcement of the Code by the Department of Buildings and the Department of Housing Preservation and Development.** Such enforcement will ensure accessible spaces for New York

City's disabled residents and senior citizens and allow them to continue to be a part of their communities and to live independently.

We also urge New York City and the Public Advocate to investigate and track evictions of tenants with disabilities, to enforce NYC's anti-discrimination laws in a systemic way, and to create new causes of action and penalties to aid in enforcement. Tracking evictions will enable NYC to identify and monitor housing providers who routinely evict tenants with disabilities. It will further help NYC identify causes of eviction that may be resolved by using NYC financial or other supportive resources to help prevent evictions. NYC must take steps to assist tenants and enforce anti-discrimination laws in a systemic way because discrimination is often not an isolated incident. Treating this as a systemic issue will help address the root causes of disability discrimination in housing. Creating new causes of actions and penalties will expand anti-discrimination protections and encourage housing providers to adopt processes that prevent disability discrimination.

Because one of the most impactful ways anti-discrimination laws are enforced is through private actions, we also advise adding a mechanism for enabling easy public access to records of discrimination patterns, in addition to public oversight hearings and reports of general findings. Building complaints and violations filed with the Department of Buildings are already available on the Department's website through the [Building Information Search](#) (BIS); discrimination records must be similarly publicly available.

NYLPI's Environmental Justice team strives to ensure timely and proper oversight and implementation of the City's landmark building decarbonization law, Local Law 97. Several bills have been introduced in recent years, including in 2026, to avoid compliance. Local Law 97 reflects the reality that building emissions make up a large percentage of harmful air pollution to all New Yorkers, and it was finalized after an extensive process involving an extraordinary number of stakeholders, Local Law 97's implementation periods were carefully calibrated to give building owners time to plan, and the law provides reasonable safety hatches. We need this law to be met by all owners in good faith, in order to protect all New Yorkers' health, and most importantly the health of tenants and owners so that we have a chance to be indoors without breathing in harmful gases, which has been the status quo for far too long. **Implementation of this law needs all hands on deck, and exemptions sought by bills such as Intros 274 , 371 and 374 of 2026 trivialize the science and analysis behind the law, and put at risk the health and wellbeing of all New Yorkers. We urge this committee to ensure that Local Law 97 is fully implemented with the expert assistance from New York City agencies like the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ), which offers an Accelerator program to all owners for free, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, and the Department of Buildings.**

About New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

For 50 years, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI) has been a leading civil rights advocate for New Yorkers marginalized by race, poverty, disability, and immigration status. Through our community lawyering model, we bridge the gap between traditional civil legal services and civil rights, building strength and capacity for both individual solutions and long-term impact. Our work integrates the power of individual representation, impact litigation, and comprehensive organizing and policy campaigns. Guided by the priorities of our communities, we strive to achieve equality of opportunity and self-determination for people with disabilities, create equal access to health care, ensure immigrant opportunity, strengthen local nonprofits, and secure environmental justice for low-income communities of color.

NYLPI's Disability Justice Program works to advance the civil rights of New Yorkers with disabilities. In the past five years alone, NYLPI disability advocates have represented thousands of individuals and won campaigns improving the lives of hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers. We have long fought disability-based discrimination in housing, and our landmark housing victories include access to New York City Housing Authority housing for persons with disabilities, as well as ensuring that countless private landlords accommodate their tenants with disabilities.

NYLPI's Environmental Justice Program works toward a New York where all people can thrive in their communities, with quality healthcare and housing, safe jobs, good schools, and healthy neighborhoods. We fight environmental racism, work to eliminate the unfair burden of environmental hazards borne by low-income communities and communities of color, and seek to create a more equitable and sustainable city.



**Testimony of Alia Soomro, Deputy Director for New York City Policy
New York League of Conservation Voters
City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings
FY27 Preliminary Budget Hearing
March 24, 2026**

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

Affordability and livability are essential to fighting climate change, furthering environmental justice, and improving our quality of life. **NYLCV urges the Council to work with the Mamdani Administration to provide robust funding for the NYC Department of Buildings' (DOB) Local Law 97 (LL97) implementation efforts and as well as DOB's and the NYC Department of Housing Preservation & Development's (HPD) efforts to end lead poisoning.**

Implement and Fund Local Law 97 Efforts

In New York City, [buildings](#) account for over 70% of the City's greenhouse gas emissions. This is one of the reasons why the City Council passed and NYLCV strongly supported Local Law 97 in 2019—to directly combat this source of climate change and reduce harmful pollutants that disproportionately impact low income and communities of color. With the first year of LL97 reporting upon us, thousands of building owners now are responsible for the carbon they emit.

In order to effectively and equitably implement LL97, NYLCV urges the Mamdani Administration and the Council Council to fund and staff a new Local Law 97 Compliance Delivery Pilot Program, an all-in-one financing, technical assistance, and retrofit delivery pilot program to assist owners with the law's compliance. The program should aim to lower the costs and reduce complexity through city bulk purchasing of equipment and services to comply with the law. NYLCV is encouraged to see approximately \$1.8 million allocated each year from FY27-FY30 for the NYC Accelerator Expansion in the Preliminary Budget.

We were glad to see that the Mayor's FY27 Preliminary Plan includes an additional \$1.8 million of baselined City funding starting in Fiscal 2027 to expand the NYC Accelerator program, which provides free technical assistance to help private building owners reduce fossil fuel use and comply with Local Law 97. As stated in the [Committee on Environmental Protection Report](#), “the expansion creates a Co-op and Condo Hub to provide specialized support for low- and middle-income co-op and condo buildings facing unique challenges in meeting Local Law 97

targets. This increase includes \$220,000 for two policy advisor positions to oversee the Hub and \$1.6 million for an expanded consultant contract to provide technical assistance, case management, and specialized support.”

As supporters of an equitable buildings fund concept, NYLCV strongly supported the announcement of the Affordable Housing Reinvestment Fund last year. This fund will provide much-needed resources for electrification upgrades in affordable housing and help ensure that LL97 drives investment in the buildings and communities most in need of support, while creating local jobs, health and economic benefits for New York City. The Fund will flow through the Resilient & Equitable Decarbonization Initiative (REDi), a joint New York City Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) and New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) initiative which already has a significant pipeline of affordable housing locations that are ready and willing to start building retrofits. We underscore the need for ensuring the REDi program has sufficient funding to implement this new program.

NYLCV also urges the City to continue coordinating and identifying funding opportunities at all levels of government. Now that the New York State Environmental Bond Act has been approved by voters, we urge the City to apply for future funding at the state level to be used toward building decarbonization for publicly-owned buildings and schools, especially in disadvantaged communities. We strongly urge the Governor and the legislature to not weaken the CLCPA and instead move forward with the New York Clean Air Initiative and other climate programs to advance equitable decarbonization statewide.

At the state level there are a couple of bills that NYLCV supports that will help with Local Law 97 compliance. First, NYLCV supports S.1335-B/A.5404-B (Parker/Stern), which would expand the authorizing language for the Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy program (C-PACE) to include water improvements, resiliency improvements, and the use of low carbon intensity building components. The C-PACE loan program is a secure mechanism for property owners to fund energy efficiency, renewable energy, and water conservation upgrades, repaid via annual property tax assessments. It covers up to 100% of project costs with long-term, low-cost capital, often without upfront cash. It is an important financial tool in helping building owners make their properties more resilient and energy efficient while helping to lower greenhouse gas emissions. By broadening the authorizing language to the C-PACE program, owners could access capital to enable their buildings to withstand a myriad of extreme weather hazards, as well as make improvements designed to advance energy storage, microgrids, alternative vehicle storage infrastructure, and to improve indoor air quality. NYLCV encourages the City to support this state legislation.

We also encourage the City to support S.8170-A/A.10549 (Kavanagh/Braunstein), which would allow New York City to extend the timeframe for its J-51 Reform (“J-51 R”) tax abatement program for income eligible coops, condos and rent-regulated multifamily properties to June 30, 2030. With the program set to expire in June 2026, we urge its timely passage during this legislative session. Originally established to support housing quality and affordability, J-51 R plays a new and urgent role in NYC’s decarbonization efforts. Among other benefits, this

program is a lifeline for NYC's coops and condominiums that must meet LL97 requirements. These owner-occupied, income-diverse properties often struggle to finance large-scale retrofits, like heat pump installation, envelope upgrades, or high-performance windows. J-51 R is one of the few tools available to offset these capital costs while keeping housing costs stable for New Yorkers.

Moreover, as we implement LL97, the City must also increase funding for an equitable, green workforce training and development program—with an emphasis on investment in frontline communities. This law has the potential to create more than [140,000 jobs by 2030 in NYC](#). These jobs should be well-paying, union jobs, which will help reduce unemployment and raise wages, particularly for a green building and construction workforce pilot programs.

Implementing Local Law 97 and funding agencies that handle renewable energy infrastructure is a critical step towards reducing carbon emissions and combating climate change, and we cannot afford any missteps or delays.

Fund DOB to Support Battery Energy Storage Permitting

When it comes to renewable energy infrastructure, DOB has a key role to play in ensuring battery energy storage systems (BESS) are safely approved. Battery energy storage systems, along with renewable energy sources such as solar and wind, are a vital and safe technology solution not only for the clean energy transition but to make our energy grid more resilient and efficient. These systems can help meet grid reliability needs amid growing electricity demand, cut costs by mitigating the need for costly traditional fossil-fuel infrastructure upgrades, and dramatically increase the grid's ability to onboard new renewable energy. Every BESS site must meet rigorous standards and is reviewed for safety by both DOB and FDNY.

NYLCV urges the city to fund additional staff lines to support DOB's Office of Technical Certification & Research in order to safely streamline BESS permit review to ensure applications can be handled expeditiously. According to the *New York 6 GW Energy Storage Roadmap*, NYC will need approximately 2 GW of energy storage capacity within the five boroughs by 2030. Currently, there is just over 100 MW of energy storage deployed in NYC. This means ~380 MW of energy storage must be installed in the city *annually* between 2026 and 2030 to meet the 2 GW need. DOB will need significantly more staffing to process applications.

Eliminate Lead Poisoning by Funding DOB and HPD

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

ambitious lead poisoning prevention law in the county with the stated goal of ending childhood lead poisoning by 2010—lead poisoning is still a major concern.

As stated in [NYCCELP's 2024 Lead Agenda](#), the City must invest in DOB and HPD programs and interventions that will especially protect children from lead poisoning. This includes measures funding proactive inspections and notification for tenants exposed to lead hazards. The City must ensure sufficient funding goes towards DOB's code enforcement and Office of Tenant Advocate. Additionally, HPD needs sufficient funding for its Lead Hazard Reduction and Healthy Homes Program.

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

NYLCV urges the Council to provide robust funding for DOB's LL97 implementation, DOB's renewable energy permitting, and DOB and HPD's work to end lead poisoning. Without this, the City cannot adequately address existing public health inequities and future climate threats.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.



March 24, 2026
New York City Council
Hearing Before the Committee on Housing and Buildings
Re: Budget and Oversight Hearings
Written Testimony of the New York Legal Assistance Group

Greetings Chair Sanchez and members of the New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the experience of NYCHA tenants. 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 communities, community organizations, agencies, and elected officials, and operates numerous legal clinics in locations such as community centers, courthouses, and hospitals. NYLAG’s Tenants’ Rights Unit provides free legal services and advocacy to low-income people facing eviction and housing insecurity. 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. I am an attorney and Skadden Fellow on TRU’s Public Housing Justice Project (PHJP), where I work on repair issues for NYCHA tenants. I am one of the only attorneys in the city funded to represent NYCHA tenants in standalone HP actions. I also work informally with NYCHA and NYCHA tenants to address conditions.

NYLAG submits this testimony to specifically address systemic hurdles that NYCHA tenants face when trying to access HPD resources to enforce the Housing Maintenance Code in their apartments. NYLAG has separately submitted joint written testimony with other legal services providers, urging the City to a) align the timing of nonprofit funding with that of City agencies so that nonprofits contracted to deliver services on behalf of the City can do so without delay; b) ensure that Right to Counsel providers are paid in a timely manner; c) increase funding for Right to Counsel to a level that allows providers to provide high-quality, holistic services to all eligible cases; d) eliminate or suspend the 10% performance penalty; e) count and fund rollover cases, brief service, and advice work; and f) streamline and simplify the onerous reporting requirements of the Right to Counsel contracts. The Committee’s attention is respectfully directed to that testimony for additional matters outside of NYCHA code enforcement.

HPD Policies Create Unnecessary Barriers for NYCHA Tenants Seeking Repairs

HPD can make small changes that would make a large difference for NYCHA's tenants. To start, HPD inspections need to be reformed to be as accessible as possible to NYCHA tenants. Currently, NYCHA tenants cannot call 311 to request an HPD inspection. If they do call 311, they are rerouted to NYCHA's Customer Care Center. This is like if a private tenant called 311 to report that their landlord was not making repairs and instead of receiving help or information, was rerouted back to that very same landlord. Currently, NYCHA tenants must file an HP action and get a court-order for their apartment to receive an HPD inspection. At the same time, NYCHA tenants are carved out of legal services devoted to standalone HP actions. Without access to representation, filing HP actions can be difficult especially for those facing barriers like disabilities or intense work and care schedules. NYCHA tenants should be able to schedule HPD inspections in the same manner as private tenants, so that they can negotiate for repairs without having to file an HP action and so that HPD data about Housing Maintenance Code Violations in NYCHA apartments are as accurate as possible. NYCHA tenants, who already face conditions that are the result of decades of racist underfunding and environmental racism, should not be treated differently than private tenants simply because of their status as public housing tenants.

Once NYCHA tenants do get an HPD inspection scheduled after bringing an HP action, tenants often wait all day for an inspector to show up. HPD inspections are crucial to ensuring the success of HP actions, as the inspection report created (which lists Housing Maintenance Code violations in the unit) are a strong source of evidence and the basis for a Housing Court Judge to issue an Order to Correct. Ensuring that scheduled inspections take place is in the best interest of tenants, landlords, HPD and the court system. There is a concerning trend that is leading to missed inspections. HPD will call tenants a few minutes before they arrive for their inspection, and if the tenants do not pick up the phone, HPD will not knock on their door and will simply skip their inspection. This policy is not routinely communicated to tenants when they request an HPD inspection, so tenants aren't aware that they need to answer this call to receive their inspection. This leads to missed inspections, either because tenants don't have access to a phone, or simply didn't pick up a call from an unknown number. This policy needs to be clearly communicated to tenants on the inspection request form, and there must be a way for tenants to opt out and have HPD knock on their door. When an inspection is missed, a new one must be scheduled by returning to court and requesting a new court ordered inspection. This causes further delays and can leave tenants in serious and dangerous conditions for longer than necessary.

Public Housing Communities Deserve and Require Accountability From NYCHA

Hazardous living conditions at NYCHA are compounded by mismanagement and misinformation, underlining the importance of NYCHA tenants' access to HPD inspections and other code enforcement services. Before retaining an attorney from NYLAG to assist them, our clients often feel that they are left with no recourse towards repairs due to their exclusion from city services and NYCHA's inadequate and burdensome repair processes. For instance, tenants are

often told by management that no repairs can be made until they submit a repair ticket through the NYCHA portal, which requires a computer and internet access, or by calling NYCHA's Customer Contact Center, where wait times can be several hours long. Once tenants' succeed in submitting repair tickets, NYCHA will frequently close them without doing anything to investigate or repair the condition. When tenants call to follow up, NYCHA staff will tell them they have to submit a new ticket number in order for anything to be done. When tickets are acted on, maintenance will frequently "inspect" tenants' apartments over and over again without making any repairs, wasting NYCHA's time and money. NYCHA will give access dates to tenants that are months away, and then won't show up on those days, delaying repairs and requiring tenants to endlessly rearrange work and care schedules for access days that NYCHA will most likely ignore.

The City must invest in creating structures and systems that enable them to manage the needs of their tenants responsively and effectively, and HPD must oversee NYCHA to ensure they do so. The current disorganization leads to increased challenges for tenants and wasted resources. For example, one tenant dealing with a leak in her ceiling had painters and plaster repair workers sent to her apartment multiple times before the leak was fixed. Each time plaster and paint workers came to her apartment, they had to leave without doing any work, because paint cannot be applied before plaster, and wet plaster cannot be replaced if there is still an active leak. NYCHA departments also struggle to communicate internally, leading to poor scheduling and coordination. For instance, a client had a major leak, and was told by NYCHA maintenance that it needed to be addressed by plumbing. When plumbing came to inspect, she was told that they could not do any work because it was actually a job for maintenance. When maintenance returned, they insisted it was actually a job for plumbing and that there was nothing they could do. This is further demonstrated by NYCHA's system for lead and asbestos remediation. NYLAG has worked with multiple clients who have had both asbestos and lead in their apartments. Asbestos abatement is handled by a different department than lead abatement, and the two departments do not communicate well, if at all. NYLAG has worked with tenants who were relocated twice, once for each abatement, instead of NYCHA doing all the work at once, entirely because of this lack of communication between departments. Certain vendors are incredibly difficult to schedule, which can delay the rest of the repairs and prolong litigation. For example, a client once waited six months for his bathtub to be reglazed, despite being represented by an attorney in an active HP action, because the scheduling was so difficult.

The conditions in NYCHA buildings are not an accident, and the city must fully invest in repairing the micro and macro systems that cause harm to NYCHA residents. New York City's main avenue for holding landlords accountable is HPD and code enforcement, and NYCHA should not be excused from this accountability. We urge the city council to not only fully fund NYCHA so it has the resources it needs to address both capital and operational repairs, but to also ensure that NYCHA tenants have the same tools as private tenants when they are failed by their landlord, and forced to live in unsafe homes.

Policy Requests

We strongly urge the city council to

1. Allow NYCHA tenants to request HPD inspections by calling 311.
2. Ensuring that HPD inspectors both knock on tenants' doors and call tenants before arriving to ensure access is granted and inspections take place. Additionally, the HPD inspection request form should be altered to include information for tenants' on what they need to do to ensure their inspection takes place.
3. Include NYCHA tenants in legal service funding for standalone HP actions.

Respectfully submitted,

Sophia Fenn
Skadden Fellow, Public Housing Justice Project
Tenants' Rights Unit
New York Legal Assistance Group



New York City Council

Committee on Housing and Buildings

Preliminary Budget Hearing on 3.24.2026

Good afternoon, Chair Sanchez and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Tonya Ores, Chief Executive Officer of Neighborhood Housing Services of New York City.

I am joined today by several longtime partners in community-based housing services:

- Angella Cummings, Executive Director of NHS Brooklyn;
- Richard Truth, Executive Director of Brooklyn Neighborhood Services;
- Gladstone Johnson, Executive Director of Bronx NHS; and
- Yoselin Genao-Estrella, Executive Director of NHS Queens.

Together, our organizations have served New York City homeowners and neighborhoods for more than forty years. While we now operate as independent nonprofits, we continue to work closely together to preserve homeownership and neighborhood stability across the city.

Today we are united in requesting **\$1 million from the City Council to launch a citywide pilot Property Management Program** to support small homeowners who are struggling to maintain their properties.

Across New York City, many owners of one- to four-family homes find it difficult to manage routine exterior maintenance. For seniors, homeowners with disabilities, or lower income homeowners, tasks like snow removal, landscaping, trash and recycling management, and basic site upkeep can become physically or financially overwhelming. When these responsibilities go unmet, homeowners may face violations, mounting costs, and added pressure that can threaten housing stability.

For many older homeowners who want to age in place, and more many others who struggle with this responsibility, property management support can make the difference between staying in their home and having to leave it.

This pilot program would provide free property management services to eligible homeowners, helping them keep their homes safe, compliant, and well maintained. In its first year, the program is expected to assist at least 30 homeowners with an estimated total of 95 units.



Neighborhood Housing Services of New York City would administer the Property Management Program and provide coordination, training, and ongoing technical assistance to our NHS partner organizations. Through this collaboration model, our partners will be equipped to deliver services directly within their communities, ensuring that homeowners have access to trusted, locally based support.

By strengthening the capacity of both homeowners and community-based organizations, this program will help prevent housing instability, protect small homeowners' assets, and promote responsible property management.

We respectfully request that the New York City Council support this initiative as a practical and impactful step toward helping vulnerable homeowners remain in their homes, preserve generational wealth and maintain the strength and stability of neighborhoods.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



Testimony Regarding Priorities for the New York City Executive Budget for Housing, Fiscal Year 2026-2027

March 24, 2026

The Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development (ANHD) thanks Committee Chairs Pierina Sanchez and Linda Lee, and members of the Committees, for the opportunity to testify on housing-related proposals for the Fiscal Year 2027 Preliminary Budget. My name is Emily Goldstein, and I am ANHD's Director of Advocacy and Policy.

About the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development

ANHD is one of New York City's lead policy, advocacy, and technical assistance and capacity-building organizations. We maintain a membership of 80+ neighborhood-based and citywide nonprofit organizations that have affordable housing and/or equitable economic development as a central component of their mission. We are an essential voice, bridging the power and impact of our member groups to build community power and ensure the right to affordable housing and thriving, equitable neighborhoods for all New Yorkers. We value justice, equity, and opportunity, and we believe in the importance of movement building that centers marginalized communities in our work. Across 5 decades and 5 boroughs we have consistently focused on addressing New York's housing affordability crisis, displacement, and economic inequity to build community power.

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

The Community Housing Preservation Strategies (CHPS) Initiative

We are grateful for the Council's longstanding commitment to the Community Housing Preservation Strategies (CHPS) Initiative, which has served as a lifeline for the city's most vulnerable tenants and homeowners for more than fifteen years. Through CHPS, over 45 community-based organizations provide preservation services in neighborhoods most at risk of displacement, particularly among low-income, BIPOC, and immigrant communities. However, despite this essential work, our CHPS partners continue to face significant challenges: over a decade of flat funding that has ignored a ~38% rise in the cost of living since FY16, growing community need, and systemic delays in city contracting and payment processes that place enormous strain on service providers.



In light of the escalating housing crisis, we call on the City Council to increase CHPS funding to \$5.37 million in FY27. The program's funding has remained flat at \$3.65 million since 2016, despite skyrocketing demand and increasing costs. New investments would enable CHPS groups to scale their services, provide cost-of-living adjustments for staff, and expand their capacity to address evictions, poor housing conditions, and tenant harassment across the city.

Displacement Alert Project (DAP)

DAP is a critical resource for affordable housing advocates, helping users to proactively identify and outreach to those at risk of displacement and do in-depth research of individual building histories. The tool has scaled since inception and has the capacity to continue expanding in New York and beyond to support unit, building, and area level strategies that prevent affordable housing displacement. We gained over 450 new registered users in 2025, bringing the total to 1,842 users. Additionally, the spike in DAP engagement from 2023 to 2024 (when the total number of users doubled from 20,000 to 40,000) was sustained over the past year, with over 40,000 total users in 2025. Importantly, DAP users are using the site more consistently as well, rising from 76 active users per day in 2023 to nearly 150 in 2025. In addition, ANHD provided two introductory training sessions to DAP to help organizations and advocates leverage data tools, build organizing strategies, and advance tenant protections, while providing direct troubleshooting support to CHPS-funded groups responding to housing crises in real time.

We urge the City Council to continue their crucial funding of this work through our application for \$218,171 for ANHD's Displacement Alert Project and our Capacity Building Training and Technical Assistance for the CHPS program. This will allow us to maintain and expand DAP, provide technical assistance and training to CHPS-funded organizations to improve housing stability efforts, and produce research and data tools around housing risk and affordability, to support housing advocacy and policy solutions

Housing Capital Funding

Preservation

ANHD urges the Administration and the City Council to prioritize preservation of our existing affordable housing in the Housing Capital budget for FY27 and beyond. Over the past several decades, New York City has rightly invested billions of dollars to develop and preserve affordable housing throughout the five boroughs. Much of this government subsidized and regulated affordable housing is now financially unstable due to rising operational costs.

Utilities and insurance costs have risen 20–35%, squeezing budgets already stretched thin by mortgage payments, payroll, and regulatory compliance. Meanwhile, tenant incomes have stagnated, resulting in decreased rent collection rates. Pandemic-era tenant delinquencies have worsened the problem, as many non-profit owners of subsidized housing were never able to access programs like ERAP that prioritized private landlords.

The preliminary budget does not include enough capital resources to address this preservation



crisis. In the Fiscal 2027 Preliminary Capital Plan, the City allocates approximately \$304.9 million for its primary preservation loan programs, including the Participation Loan Program (PLP) and Neighborhood Pillars — a decrease from \$400.3 million at adoption. We note that these programs are not exclusively for the preservation of existing subsidized housing but are also intended to enable the acquisition and preservation of private distressed housing. This allocation is simply not enough to meet the current moment. **ANHD calls on the Mayor and the City Council to allocate \$1 Billion in housing capital specifically for preservation for each of the next 4 years.**

Public Land

ANHD has long supported the use of public land for public good, and we commend the Mayor's effort to identify city-owned sites across agencies' portfolios that would be suitable for affordable housing development. We urge the Mayor to commit to a policy that any housing developed on city-controlled sites be 100% affordable, and permanently affordable, with as high a percentage of deeply affordable units as financing terms can enable. Public land presents one of the clearest opportunities to deliver deeply affordable housing at scale, and continued investment in these projects will be essential. We also believe the public interest is best served by prioritizing mission-driven non-profits as developers for public sites, as they are more accountable to and engaged with the needs and priorities of local communities, and use any available income from their development projects after costs to provide essential services to their communities.

Deep affordability

While ANHD maintains the need to prioritize preservation in our current moment, we also agree that increased affordable housing supply is needed. However, it's important that our public investment in new affordable housing matches the need, which is heavily concentrated at the lowest income levels. [ANHD's analysis](#) shows that households making 50% of AMI or below made up more than three-quarters of rent burdened renter households in NYC. Yet in 2024, the overwhelming majority of the new housing units built in NYC were affordable only to households with incomes of 80% AMI and above. Public resources for new housing development must be targeted to help correct this imbalance.

Code Enforcement

ANHD is heartened by the new Administration's expressions of commitment to prioritize safety, affordability, and dignity for NYC's rent stabilized tenants. New York City's tenants have organized for years to preserve their homes and defend their right to live in safe, healthy conditions. But for too long, known bad actors have continued to harass and displace tenants, have been responsible for horrific living conditions and threats to public safety - and have not been properly held accountable by city government.

Organizing is an essential tool to uplift the challenges many tenants are facing in their homes and their buildings due to deteriorating physical conditions and tenant harassment. The Partners in Preservation program represents a powerful partnership between the city and community groups that should continue to be robustly funded. Together, by forming tenant associations and accessing education on their rights under New York law, tenants are taking



charge of their living conditions.

ANHD supports continued funding for Partners in Preservation and calls for strengthened funding to the Emergency Repair Program, as well as and for increased investment in code enforcement programs and staffing, to adequately meet the need – much of which will be self-funding, if the City collects the penalties it is owed.

For numerous reasons, including language barriers, problematic inspection scheduling, and more, tenants with clear violations of the City’s Housing Maintenance Code face difficulty navigating the complaint process to establish a violation. If a tenant is successful in securing an inspection with an inspector who can communicate in their language and who correctly identifies the presence of a violation, they still face the core challenge: getting their landlord to perform meaningful repair work. A particular challenge is landlords who abuse their ability to self-certify violations as corrected. Since 2019, HPD has conducted an annual audit of self-certifications of the most hazardous violations (Class C) – in each of the past five years, at least 30% of audited certifications of corrections have been found to be falsely certified. And when repairs are done, too often they do not address the underlying condition causing the issue—for example, when a property manager abates the surface-level mold on a bedroom wall but doesn’t repair the leak in the pipe behind the wall causing the mold (HPD Audits of Certification of Correction 2019-2025).

Although landlords are supposed to face penalties when they fail to make proper repairs, for years, the City has routinely forgiven or deferred penalties in favor of negotiated agreements. While this may be an appropriate strategy to get violations corrected in the case of good actors with limited numbers of serious violations, tenants often find themselves going back to housing court numerous times over the course of years, only to see the pattern of broken agreements repeat. This Mayoral administration has repeatedly signaled that it will change this policy, and, moving forward, the City must emphasize the collection of penalties in order to ensure that they actually act as a deterrent. And increased collection rates would have additional financial benefits for the public. As the City faces budget shortfalls, it is essential that we hold negligent landlords accountable for what they owe. Looking exclusively at false certifications of Class C violations, there is significant room to raise revenue: in 2024, we collected only \$44,000 in penalties for falsely certified violations, which is less than \$2 per known false certification. If the City had merely applied the lowest penalty amount (\$500) to each of these, it could have raised \$10 million – in other words, the City collected **about half a percent** of what it was owed in this realm alone (ANHD analysis of HPD Audits of Certification of Correction 2019-2025).

To tackle these problems holistically will require major investments, which do not materialize in this budget proposal. At a high level, the Expense Budget indicates essentially flat funding for the portion of HPD that would implement these changes – increases of \$1 million for personnel and for OTPS do not amount to a significant investment when stretched across multiple offices and numerous divisions within HPD ([Expense, Revenue, Contract Budget - February 2026 Plan](#)).

In situations where violations create hazardous situations that threaten their health, safety, and wellbeing of tenants, the Emergency Repair Program (ERP) is an absolutely critical backstop.



Relative to the November Plan, the Mayor's Preliminary Budget also increases funding for the Emergency Repair Program (ERP) by \$4.5 million and \$3.7 million in FY27 ([Financial Plan Reconciliation - February 2026 Plan](#)). The Council should support this increase and push further – trends in recent spending indicate that, despite the increase, this program is still underbudgeted relative to the need. Currently, contractors do much of the emergency repair work, but directly engaging city staff to do this work may be a path toward cost savings while maintaining high quality ([Budget Function Analysis - February 2026 Plan](#)).

Right to Counsel

Since New York City established the Right to Counsel program in 2017, it has become clear that it works as intended – when they have representation, New Yorkers are nearly always able to fend off eviction and stay in their homes. And yet, as we approach 10 years since the program was first piloted, it is underfunded and in crisis. Nearly all tenants facing eviction are eligible for Right to Counsel, yet since the end of the eviction moratorium in January 2022, only 40% have received representation. And over time, as eviction caseloads have steadily climbed and courts have moved through cases faster, funding has lagged behind: from 2022 to 2024 the number of tenants facing eviction who were eligible for RTC more than doubled but spending grew by only 33%. In tandem, the percentage of tenants with representation has fallen further, with less than 1 in 3 tenants receiving legal representation in recent months ([NYC Eviction Crisis Monitor](#)).

Although the law was slated to be fully implemented by 2022, RTC has never been adequately funded ([City Limits](#)). Today, this chronic underfunding threatens to erode the promise of the program. With a contract structure that covers less than 60% of the real costs of eviction defense – which has become increasingly complex as courts sift through positive but significant changes to housing law in the wake of 2019's Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act and 2024's Good Cause Eviction Law – providers are stretched thin ([Legal Aid](#)). Current funding hovers around \$136 million per year, which is woefully inadequate.

ANHD supports the Right to Counsel coalition's call for an additional \$350 million to fully fund the program, ensuring adequate staffing to meet the rising need and full compensation for the attorneys and organizations defending clients from eviction.

When we invest in eviction prevention, it pays off for all of us – in reduced shelter costs, lower demand for public assistance, and more resilient communities.

CityFHEPS

ANHD was proud to work with our members, allies, and the City Council to pass legislation in 2023 expanding eligibility for CityFHEPS vouchers. We are disappointed in Mayor Mamdani's decision to continue the previous administration's lawsuit against this legislation, and urge the Mayor to follow through on the promises made by Mayor Zohran Mamdani on the campaign trail and fully implement the 2023 CityFHEPS expansion. CityFHEPS is a proven way to help get New Yorkers into safe and permanent housing while also providing a steady and reliable income to our affordable housing providers. While expanding the program to cover families



facing eviction is projected to cost the city approximately \$8 billion dollars, it is also expected to save \$5 billion from reduced shelter and rehousing costs—resulting in a net cost of about \$3 billion over five years ([CSS](#)). **The expansion of CityFHEPS will make great strides in alleviating the increasing homelessness crisis and we strongly urge the Administration to act quickly to implement the law.**

Source of Income Discrimination

We urge the City to strengthen our current laws to prevent the discrimination we often see voucher holders face in their search for housing. Even after New Yorkers have gone through various obstacles to obtain their voucher, they face more hurdles as they begin their search for a safe and affordable home. These New Yorkers are too often faced with discriminatory practices, given excuses that are often proxies for race and class. We urge the Council to quickly pass Council Member Krishnan’s MOVE Act (Intros. 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, and 269 of 2026) to ban credit checks and income requirements for voucher holders and end this culture of discrimination. ANHD further recommends increasing staffing of the NYC Commission on Human Rights to 2018 levels to support voucher holders who have faced discrimination.

Agency Staffing

Increased capacity at key housing agencies, including HPD and HRA, is critical to addressing New York City’s housing crisis.

HPD must have sufficient staff capacity to support nonprofit developers working under regulatory agreements across all stages of preservation and asset management. Many of ANHD’s members manage portfolios of HPD-financed affordable housing and are facing significant financial distress driven by rising operating costs and an inflationary environment. The urgency is underscored by the City’s own data: HPD’s asset management rental portfolio grew 17 percent in a single year to nearly 2,500 projects, and the share classified as high risk has risen steadily to 16 percent. A growing portfolio with increasing financial distress demands more staff capacity, not less — yet the personal services budget for the Office of Housing Preservation stands at \$59.3 million in the FY27 Preliminary Budget, less than the previous fiscal year. Delays in updating preservation term sheets, processing subsidy renewals, and approving program applications put these buildings in jeopardy. **We urge the Council to prioritize new hiring in HPD’s preservation and asset management divisions and to establish clear processing time standards so that nonprofit developers can plan and execute with greater certainty.**

HPD’s code enforcement and litigation units require additional staff to address the needs of tenants. Increasing staff capacity for inspections and for oversight through programs like the Alternative Enforcement Program, the Underlying Conditions program, the Certification Watchlist, and the Certificate of No Harassment is necessary to ensure that the agency can respond promptly and thoroughly to tenant complaints and conduct routine inspections, as well as engage in proactive, holistic measures like roof-to-cellar inspections. There is a corresponding need for additional funding for litigation. The Mayor’s proposal to significantly



increase staffing at the Law Department is welcome, but dedicated litigation support is essential to adequately enforce the housing maintenance code and keep tenants safe.

Reviewing the Budget Function Analysis of the February 2026 Plan, approximately \$36 million is allocated for full-time salaried employees working broadly on code enforcement, an increase from \$32 million in 2025 ([Budget Function Analysis - February 2026 Plan](#)). Some of this funding appears to be directed to allow HPD to continue staffing up Housing Inspectors and related positions, which, along with other HPD positions, were particularly understaffed following the pandemic ([Independent Budget Office](#)). Funding for positions within the Housing Litigation Division (HLD), however, remains flat – which will hinder the Mayor’s stated goals of holding repeat-offending landlords accountable. **The Council should prioritize increasing staffing within the Code Enforcement and Housing Litigation Division.**

Delayed Contracts and Stalled Projects

The failure of NYC’s contracting process is now well known, but unfortunately persists. Non-profit organizations that carry out essential services are being forced to lay off staff, reduce programming, and decline new city funding, and take out loans because of long delays in receiving payment for city contracts.

ANHD members working in low- and moderate-income (LMI) communities across the city that depend on timely City contracts to sustain their operations. This includes nonprofit housing developers, who need reliable funding to preserve and build affordable housing. When contract approvals are delayed, projects stall, forcing nonprofits to absorb financial losses they cannot afford. Every CHPS organization has reported delays in registration and payment, forcing them to front costs for essential services while waiting months or even years to be reimbursed. These delays significantly hinder program operations and staff retention, placing strain on frontline teams and putting tenant protections at risk.

We urge the City to address the systemic contracting backlog by advancing reforms and ensuring timely contract approvals and payments.

Homeownership

Low- and moderate-income homeowners, especially older adults, are also increasingly at risk of displacement in neighborhoods throughout New York City. ANHD commends the Council for its support of the Foreclosure Prevention Initiative, which leverages loans, counseling and education to keep New Yorkers in their homes. We support increasing this initiative to \$6.29 million in FY27. Additionally, ANHD supports increasing funding for the Home Loan Program Initiative, the CLT Initiative and the Estate Planning and Resolution (EPAR) Initiative to keep families in their homes, expand permanently affordable homeownership opportunities, and protect generational assets as homeowners age.



We look forward to continued engagement as the budget process moves toward adoption and thank the Committees for the opportunity to testify. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Emily Goldstein: emily.g@anhd.org.

Request for \$1 million from NYC Council for Property Management Services for Senior Homeowners in Bedford-Stuyvesant.

Good morning, my name is Richard Truth, and I am the Executive Director for Brooklyn Neighborhood Services. I am here to support a pilot program that would provide free property management services to eligible homeowners to help them to keep their homes safe, compliant and well maintained; thus assisting them to Age in Place. A significant number of these homes are brownstone and limestone structures, that require specialized maintenance and management, which is very costly and these homeowners are now retired and living on very fixed incomes and unable to afford this expense. Aging pre-war buildings require specific and often delicate repair processes and proper maintenance not only preserve the structural integrity, but also to ensure safe and comfortable living conditions.

Specialized Maintenance

Historically these types of properties gave homeowners the ability to rent units to generate additional income and help offset their expenses.. Unfortunately too many of these property owners are no longer able to manage the upkeep and the units remain in deplorable and often hazardous conditions, sometimes including the owner's primary unit.

Compliance and Safety Regulations

Navigating New York's very complex housing laws and regulatory systems can be especially challenging for a senior property owner who most often is unfamiliar with the requirements and understandably intimidated by the process.

Daily Operations

Many seniors face mobility issues and other age-related challenges that make it very difficult for them to manage routine property responsibilities such as collecting rent, tenant screening, maintenance coordination, responding to tenant inquiries and complaints in a time manner, preparing and enforcing lease agreements and advertising vacancies.

Property Preservation

Senior homeowners are often vulnerable to predatory actors, who exploit their circumstances by charging excessive fees or in some cases attempting to take control of their property altogether.

FINAL ASK

By strengthening the capacity of both homeowners and community-based organizations, this pilot Property Management Program will help prevent housing stability, protect small homeowner's assets and promote responsible property management across the communities that we serve.

We respectfully request that the New York City Council support this initiative as a practical and impactful step toward helping vulnerable homeowners remain in their homes, preserve generational wealth, and maintain the strength and stability of communities like Bedford-Stuyvesant.

Thank you for your consideration



Grounded in community.
Advocating for all.

WRITTEN TESTIMONY FOR THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL, HOUSING AND BUILDINGS COMMITTEE, PRELIMINARY BUDGET HEARING BY BUILD UP JUSTICE NYC

March 24, 2026

Dear Chair Sanchez and members of the Committee on Housing and Buildings,

My name is Jessica Rose and I am testifying on behalf of Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A, doing business as Build Up Justice NYC (BUJNYC). BUJNYC has submitted several applications for renewed discretionary funding in Fiscal Year 2027 for our Preserving Affordable Housing (PAH) Program, which provides legal representation and legal education and advocacy strategies to preserve and protect affordable housing, prevent eviction, combat tenant harassment and discrimination, and helps tenant organizations marshal the power of strength in numbers to protect the right to safe and sanitary housing.

Our applications include \$150,000 from Legal Services for Low-Income New Yorkers (2166139); \$350,000 from the Speaker's Initiative (2214160); \$40,000 from DoVE (2214334); \$50,000 from Community Housing Preservation Strategies (2214362); \$50,000 from Information and Referral Services (2214373); and \$50,000 from Stabilizing NYC (2214395).

BUJNYC's Preserving Affordable Housing (PAH) Program operates in Brooklyn and Queens, using legal representation, brief advice/services, and legal education and advocacy strategies to preserve and protect affordable housing, prevent eviction, combat tenant harassment and discrimination, and helps tenant organizations marshal the power of strength in numbers to protect the right to safe and habitable housing. Last City fiscal year, the program handled more than 3,600 cases helping New Yorkers maintain housing stability and supported 20 tenant associations to fight for habitable living conditions. BUJNYC's presence in Queens has grown significantly since 2024 when we opened our PAH team for the borough. Last year, we handled 595 cases in the borough—185 of those were eviction prevention and tenant advocacy cases.

BUJNYC provides essential legal services to tenant groups, employing aggressive legal tactics to challenge the management authority of landlords that neglect affordable housing properties with the goal for the building and individual apartments to be repaired and rehabilitated so the tenants can live safely in their homes. Most of our housing work is funded by the Anti-Eviction: Full Legal Representation (formerly the Homelessness Prevention Law Project), also known as the Right to Counsel program (RTC), and Anti-Harassment Tenant Protection (AHTP). AHTP provides tenants with access to justice and legal resources for affirmative and preventive services, diverting eviction cases from being brought to court and preserving and improving affordable housing. The crucial, full array of services offered by AHTP providers are distinct

from, and complimentary to, the representation provided through the Anti-Eviction/Right to Counsel program.

BUJNYC has been on the front lines of preventing displacement for decades, responding to immediate needs and reinforcing and implementing the social safety net to protect vulnerable New Yorkers. BUJNYC not only addressed the needs of New Yorkers through the COVID-19 pandemic, but, as a Right to Counsel provider, we were also critically important once the pandemic eviction moratorium was lifted. Since then, the city's housing crisis has worsened significantly: a New York City Comptroller's report from last year found the total number of evictions rose 440% between 2020 and 2024, while representation in housing court dropped from 71% to 41% in roughly the same time period as demand grew.¹

Another report from the NYC Independent Budget Office found that between 2019 and 2024, the number of housing cases that were eligible for RTC counsel "more than tripled," adding that "trends toward longer case lengths, increased eligibility, and stagnant funding have resulted in a reduced capacity for full legal representation."² The report also noted that RTC attorneys often make less than their government or private sector counterparts, and vacancy rates of 20% or more contribute to the strain. RTC needs to be fully funded so we can hire and retain skilled advocates, improve outcomes for NYC tenants, and deliver on the promise of Right to Counsel.

AHTP funding supports our work serving tenants looking to take action against their landlords. Our clients repeatedly suffer injustice and indignity of being forced to live in uninhabitable conditions. One notable example is our work with a group of tenants in Brooklyn (who will remain anonymous). The residents were told years ago by their landlord that their units would be demolished and rebuilt. Meanwhile, our clients and many of their neighbors across the multi-location complex have had to repeatedly demand their landlord address issues like mold, leaks, broken front doors, roaches, rats, holes in the floor and ceiling, no useable mailbox, and more. Some residents have even lost their Section 8 housing vouchers as a result of their units being deemed unfit to qualify for the subsidy. Without substantive updates on the rebuilding project and slow response times for repair issues, our clients find themselves trapped in unacceptably poor conditions.

These kinds of injustices are all too common among our clients and across the city. The city needs more robust enforcement of building violations to ensure that current issues are resolved and to pressure landlords moving forward into maintaining habitable units.

There are procedural and structural bottlenecks in NYC Housing Court that materially undermine due process and case resolution, and they have been well-documented for years in formal court-system and bar reports, including:

¹ "Evictions Up, Representation Down: How New York City is Undermining the Right to Counsel." Office of NYC Comptroller. May 2, 2025. <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/evictions-up-representation-down/>

² "The Expansion of New York City's Right to Counsel Program." New York City Independent Budget Office. September 11, 2025. <https://www.ibo.nyc.gov/content/publications/2025-september-the-expansion-of-nyc-right-to-counsel-program>

- The NYS Unified Courts’ Special Commission on the Future of the New York City Housing Court (2018), and follow up “Reforming New York City Housing Court: A One-Year Update” (2019)
- The NYS Unified Courts’ Report and Recommendations of the Working Group on Regulatory Innovation (2020)
- The NYS Courts Annual Reports
- NYS Unified Courts’ Access to Justice Program white paper on the Housing Court GAL model (2016)
- The NYC Bar Association’s report on the Article 12 Guardian ad Litem Program (2025)

While the reports cited above address a wide range of Housing Court issues, we focus here on two structural issues that consistently emerge from both the literature and our daily practice: (1) a consistent intake process that connects litigants to the appropriate supports early, and (2) a sustainable Guardian ad Litem (GAL) program for tenants who cannot advocate for themselves. As a legal services provider working on the ground, we regularly witness the operational impact of these deficiencies and urge the Legislature to advance the long-overdue recommendations identified in the reports referenced above.

On intake, despite the RTC program, a core problem is the design of the process. When intake functions as “day-of-court triage,” litigants arrive without meaningful screening, documentation, or connection to assistance, and cases that could have been stabilized early instead cycle through adjournments and missed opportunities. Our clients, already under severe housing stress, are forced to navigate a byzantine system before reaching legal services. In Queens housing court, this manifest through very short adjournment dates between the time a tenant files an answer in nonpayment proceedings, appears for their virtual intake part appearance, and has their in-person appearance. Although improved staffing levels have helped this issue somewhat, tenants are still given only two weeks between each step, leaving civil legal service providers with a short window to conduct intake, file the answer, and prepare the client to either litigate or settle.

The GAL program is likewise indispensable and under strain. The Article 12 Guardian ad Litem program serves as a court-appointed safeguard for Housing Court litigants who lack the capacity to adequately protect their rights. In other words, guardians can support some of the most vulnerable tenants by liaising with the court and attorneys and connecting the tenants to critical resources. Yet significant structural barriers limit its effectiveness, including inadequate funding and insufficient access to technology and confidential court space. Compensation often hinges on APS involvement and is paid as a flat fee that, given the demands of these cases, frequently amounts to de facto pro bono work, while some appointments remain entirely uncompensated despite being mandatory. As a legal services provider that relies heavily on non-lawyer professionals in the Housing Court ecosystem, we see these GAL constraints as a persistent, well-documented bottleneck. Addressing them would materially improve case flow, client stability, and the court’s ability to reach durable resolutions for the most vulnerable tenants.

Fixing these longstanding, well-documented structural issues would immediately improve our effectiveness, reduce avoidable adjournments and defaults, and strengthen Housing Court’s ability to reach legally sound outcomes for the litigants most at risk of being left behind.

Finally, BUJNYC and our fellow RTC providers continue to face unnecessary challenges created by delayed City contracts. A comptroller report from last year found that more than half of the City’s roughly 7,000 unpaid invoices were owed to nonprofit organizations—totaling \$861 million in promised but unpaid funds.³ Our peers at Legal Services NYC are due nearly \$30 million in unpaid contracts—more than 20 percent of the organization’s annual budget—and have paid more than \$600,000 in interest on bridge loans that were used to fill the gaps left by the City.⁴ These delays force organizations to take on bridge loans to maintain cash flow for salaries and operations. Service providers that have maxed out their credit limit face the prospect of cutting jobs, which translates to fewer cases handled. We join our fellow civil legal service providers in calling on the City to take some clear, meaningful steps toward solutions, including increasing the staff for contract processing, issuing larger advances at the start of contract years, and reimbursing the interest nonprofits are forced to pay on bridge loans.

As New Yorkers continue to face the ongoing housing affordability crisis, we need fully funded civil legal service organizations to provide justice so no one is neglected simply because they cannot afford a private attorney. We urge this committee and the entire City Council to advocate for the improvements outlined above and champion civil legal services funding in the coming budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Jessica A. Rose, Esq.

Executive Director

Build Up Justice NYC

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³ “Comptroller Lander Spotlights Nonprofit Payment Delays in Follow-Up Report & Launches Audits of 3 Agencies with Worst Delays.” Office of the New York City Comptroller. April 29, 2025. <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/comptroller-lander-spotlights-nonprofit-payment-delays-in-follow-up-report-launches-audits-of-3-agencies-with-worst-delays/>

⁴ “Opinion: Payment Delays to City’s Legal Nonprofits Put Thousands at Risk.” Keriann Pauls and Shevron Small. March 9, 2026. City Limits. <https://citylimits.org/opinion-payment-delays-to-citys-legal-nonprofits-put-thousands-at-risk/>



**Testimony of Chelsea Rose
Policy & Advocacy Manager
Care For the Homeless**

**Provided to the New York City Council
Preliminary Budget Hearing:
Committee on Housing and Buildings
March 24th, 2026**

My name is Chelsea Rose, and I serve as Policy and Advocacy Manager at Care For the Homeless (CFH). I would like to thank the Housing and Buildings Committee Chair, Pierina Ana Sanchez, and all committee members for the opportunity to testify today on the City's Preliminary Budget.

Care For the Homeless has over 40 years of experience providing medical and behavioral health services exclusively to people experiencing homelessness in New York City. We operate 17 federally qualified health centers in all five boroughs. Our service sites are co-located at facilities operated by other non-profits, including shelters for single adults and families, assessment centers, soup kitchens, and drop-in centers. Additionally, our community-based health center model brings services directly to neighborhoods where the need is most significant. Both models reduce barriers unhoused New Yorkers regularly face in navigating a complex health care system by increasing access to high-quality, patient-centered health services.

In addition to our health centers, Care For the Homeless operates two shelters for single adult women, two shelters for single adult men, and one Safe Haven. Each of the shelters has an on-site health center for the residents and for the community. In these programs, our goal is to end episodes of homelessness by providing essential supportive services to help our residents obtain stable and permanent housing.

Today, I'd like to highlight the urgent need for significantly greater investment in deeply affordable housing for people experiencing homelessness and extremely low-income New Yorkers. Without housing that people struggling to pay rent or leaving shelter can actually afford, homelessness will continue to grow regardless of how many "affordable" units the city finances.

The Scale of the Homelessness Crisis

New York City is currently facing an ever-growing homelessness crisis. DHS Daily reports indicate that more than 80,000 people sleep in New York City shelters each night, including tens of thousands of children. As of March 2026, families with children make up approximately 65 percent of households living in the City's shelter system.¹ These numbers offer only a snapshot and do not capture the many New Yorkers dealing with unstable housing outside of the shelter system or one crisis away from losing their housing.



Homelessness continues to grow because the housing market is increasingly out of reach for the lowest-income New Yorkers.

Across New York City:

- More than half of renter households are rent burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on rent.
- Over 1 million households are rent burdened citywide.²

For extremely low-income households, the situation is even more severe. Many pay more than half of their income toward rent, leaving them one financial shock, such as illness, job loss, or family crisis, away from homelessness.

For the patients we serve, housing instability is not an abstract policy issue. It is a daily health crisis. In our health centers, we see patients whose diabetes, asthma, and mental health conditions worsen because they are living in shelter or cycling between unstable housing situations. Even when patients receive high-quality medical care, it is extremely difficult to manage chronic conditions without stable housing. Individuals who have experienced homelessness often have a life expectancy that is 15 – 30 years shorter than their housed counterparts.³

Housing instability directly contributes to poorer health outcomes, higher emergency room utilization, and barriers to accessing consistent care.

Simply put: housing is health care.

The Affordable Housing Supply Crisis

A fundamental driver of homelessness in New York City is a severe shortage of housing that is affordable to people with the lowest incomes. The city's most recent Housing and Vacancy Survey found a vacancy rate of just 1.4 percent; the lowest level recorded since 1968.⁴ Housing options are even more scarce at the bottom of the rental market.

For apartments renting under \$1,100 per month, the price range most affordable to extremely low-income households; the vacancy rate was just 0.39 percent.⁵ Research from the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development shows that only about 7 percent of available vacant units are affordable to the lowest-income renters, even though a majority of rent-burdened households would need units in that price range to avoid housing instability.⁶

This local shortage reflects a broader structural problem. Nationally, there are only 35 affordable and available homes for every 100 extremely low-income renters, meaning that even when units exist at lower price points, they are often out of reach.⁷ Many units that are technically “affordable” are occupied by higher-income households, leaving extremely low-income renters, including those exiting shelters, to compete for a severely limited number of homes.



While New York City finances thousands of “affordable” housing units each year, most are not affordable to people exiting shelters or living on extremely low-incomes. Many housing lotteries require incomes far above what people leaving shelter earn. As a result, the households most affected by the housing crisis are often locked out of the very housing programs intended to address it.

This mismatch between what housing costs and what New Yorkers can afford is one of the key drivers of the city’s homelessness crisis. Without targeted investment in deeply affordable housing and rental assistance, homelessness will continue to rise because the private market does not produce housing at rents that extremely low-income households can afford.

The Production Gap

The issue is not just a lack of housing production. It is a mismatch between who the housing is being built for and who needs it most. Many housing lotteries require incomes far above what people leaving shelter earn. As a result, many New Yorkers are effectively locked out of these developments, not because they earn too much, but because they earn too little.

Housing affordability is typically defined using Area Median Income (AMI), a regional benchmark that does not reflect what low-income New Yorkers actually earn. In New York City, the 2025 AMI for a three-person household is \$145,800, meaning 30 percent of AMI is approximately \$43,740. Households earning at or below this level are considered extremely low-income.⁸

Because city-subsidized housing is structured around AMI bands, most units are targeted to households earning far above this level. Many developments set not only maximum income limits, but also minimum income requirements. For example, units designated for households earning up to 60 percent of AMI may require applicants to earn no less than approximately 50 percent of AMI, automatically excluding lower-income households.⁹ In practice, this means that much of the City’s “affordable” housing is not simply unaffordable to extremely low-income New Yorkers, but categorically unavailable to them.

This structural mismatch is reflected in how housing has been produced over time. From 2014 to 2024, only 21 percent of newly financed affordable rental units were available to extremely low-income households, totaling just 22,565 units over a decade. In contrast, 69,572 units were produced for households earning between 51 and 165 percent of AMI during the same period.⁹

Even today, the largest share of new “affordable” housing production is concentrated at the highest income bands. In 2024, a significant portion of units were targeted to households earning between 121 and 165 percent of AMI, requiring incomes far exceeding \$100,000 annually for a family of three.⁹ Meanwhile, New Yorkers experiencing homelessness or living on extremely low incomes remain locked out of these opportunities.



This production gap is a key driver of the City's homelessness crisis. Without sufficient housing targeted to the lowest-income households, people remain trapped in shelter or cycling through unstable housing situations. As a result, the shelter system increasingly functions as a de facto housing provider of last resort rather than a temporary intervention.⁹

The City Council has recognized this imbalance through policies like Local Law 66, which requires that 30 percent of new affordable housing units serve extremely low-income households.¹⁰ However, mandates alone are not enough. Without the capital investment necessary to finance housing at or below 30 percent of AMI, these requirements risk falling short of their intended impact.

Recommendation: Build Deeply Affordable Housing

For this reason, Care For the Homeless urges the city to use the FY2027 capital budget to significantly increase investment in deeply affordable housing.

Specifically, the city must commit in the FY2027 capital budget to:

- Building at least 12,000 units of deeply affordable housing per year for the next five years, for a total of 60,000 units available only to households experiencing homelessness or extremely low-income New Yorkers.

Expanding access to permanent housing is not only the right thing to do; it is also fiscally responsible. Investments in permanent housing reduce shelter stays, stabilizes vulnerable households, and improves long-term health outcomes.

Conclusion

The current moment presents a critical opportunity for New York City to align its housing investments with the needs of New Yorkers most affected by the housing crisis.

If New York City is serious about addressing homelessness, it must build housing that people experiencing unstable housing can actually afford. That means prioritizing deeply affordable housing in the City's capital investments and building from the bottom up, starting with the households facing the greatest housing instability and the highest risk of homelessness.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and your continued commitment to the health, safety, and dignity of every New Yorker.

If you have any questions, please reach out to Chelsea Rose, crose@cfhnyc.org.

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**Testimony of Hattie Fernandez
Consumer Advisory Board Member
Care For the Homeless**

**Provided to the New York City Council
Preliminary Budget Hearing:
Committee on Housing and Buildings
March 24th, 2026**

Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Hattie Fernandez, and I am on the Consumer Advisory Board at Care For the Homeless. I am currently experiencing homelessness and my health, safety, and dignity have all been affected by the housing crisis here in New York.

I lived in my apartment for 15 years. When my children became adults and left home, I stayed. Over time, the rent kept rising. My one-bedroom eventually reached \$2,000 a month. I live with arthritis, and when I experienced medical issues and became unemployed, I fell behind on rent and was evicted in June.

Living out of a bag, with my life in storage, has made it hard to take care of my health. It is hard to exercise for my arthritis. It is hard to feel safe. And it is hard to hold onto your dignity when your housing is gone.

I did what the system tells people to do. I applied for rental assistance programs and went through housing court. My case stayed in housing court for months. But I was rejected for a housing voucher while my eviction was pending. I only received a voucher in October. After I had already lost my home and owed \$20,000. By then, the damage was done.

My story is personal, but it is not unique. Too many New Yorkers are facing rents that are far beyond what working people, seniors, or people with health challenges can afford.

We need the city to invest in truly affordable housing. Invest in homes that people with low incomes can actually afford without having to choose between rent, health care, and basic needs. Increasing the supply of deeply affordable housing is essential if we want to prevent more people from falling into homelessness.

At the same time, we also need stronger tools to prevent eviction in the first place. Programs like CityFHEPS can help people stay housed, but too often assistance comes after someone has already lost their home.



If help had been available earlier, I might never have lost mine.

Housing is more than a roof over your head. It is stability, health, safety, and dignity.

The City must commit to creating 12,000 units of truly affordable housing per year for the next five years—for a total of 60,000 units available only to homeless and extremely low-income households on the brink of homelessness.

No one should have to lose their home before they qualify for help.

Thank you for listening to my story.



Testimony of Catholic Migration Services before the New York City Council Committees on Housing and Buildings

March 24, 2026

Good afternoon, Chair Sanchez and members of the Committee, and thank you for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Jonathan Gaffney, and I am the supervisor of the Tenant Organizing program at Catholic Migration Services. CMS provides free legal services and community education to low-income New Yorkers in immigration, workers' rights, and housing. Our mission is to welcome "the stranger in our midst" by advancing dignity, stability, and justice for immigrant and working-class communities.

I am here today to speak in strong support of increased funding for Stabilizing NYC (SNYC) and the Community Housing Preservation Strategies (CHPS) initiative.

These programs fund a model that works: deep collaboration between legal services and tenant organizing. At CMS, our attorneys and organizers work side by side—defending tenants in housing court while also building tenant associations, developing leadership, and organizing collective action to preserve affordable housing.

Through SNYC and CHPS funding, our team has been able to carry out sustained, on-the-ground organizing across Queens in neighborhoods like Corona, Jackson Heights, Elmhurst, Jamaica, and Flushing.

Across the buildings we organize in, tenants consistently report:

- Lack of heat and hot water
- Persistent mold, leaks, and water damage
- Rodent and cockroach infestations
- Dangerous conditions such as exposed electrical wiring and broken entryway
- Non-functioning appliances and unsafe common areas
- Harassment and intimidation from landlords and building staff
- Attempts to extract illegal cash payments for rent, repairs, or access to housing

In one building in Corona, tenants organized through CMS documented widespread unsafe conditions – including mold, exposed wiring, and inoperable doors – while also raising serious concerns about harassment by building staff. Through consistent organizing, tenants formed a tenant association, developed collective demands, and secured a meeting with management. As a result, management committed to increased oversight of the building and changes to how rent is collected, reducing opportunities for abuse.

This work is labor-intensive. It requires repeated door-knocking, follow-up conversations, translation, meeting facilitation, coalition coordination, and close collaboration with legal teams. It requires meeting tenants where they are—often outside of traditional business hours—and building trust over time.

Stabilizing NYC and HPI funding has not kept pace with the scale of the housing crisis or the cost of doing this work. SNYC has not seen an increase in funding in over six years, even as the cost of living, staffing, and operations has risen significantly. At the same time, the demand for services continues to grow as more tenants face displacement, harassment, and deteriorating housing conditions.

We therefore strongly support:

- Allocate \$5.7 million to Stabilizing NYC, a coalition of over 20 community organizing groups that provide community education and self-advocacy tools to tenants; and
- Allocate \$5.37 million to the Community Housing Preservation Initiative, a coalition of over 45 community-based organizations fighting eviction and displacement in all five boroughs."

These increases are necessary to sustain and expand the work that is already proving effective in stabilizing tenants and preserving affordable housing.

New York City is facing an ongoing housing crisis. Tenants are organizing, speaking out, and demanding safe, stable, and affordable housing. Programs like SNYC and CHPS ensure that they are not doing this alone.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and we urge the Council to fully support these funding increases.



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Courtney Bryan, Chief Executive Officer

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Table of Contents

Page 1

- Center for Justice Innovation New York City Program Map

Page 2 - Page 5

- Written testimony for submission to 3/24/26 City Council Preliminary Budget Hearing of the Committee on Housing and Buildings

Page 6 - Page 10

- Summary of Center for Justice Innovation FY27 Proposals

Page 11 - 17

- Letters of Support;
 - Bronx County District Attorney
 - Richmond County District Attorney
 - Manhattan District Attorney
 - Kings County District Attorney (forthcoming)

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 Development

Click on the name of any program to learn more.

STATEN ISLAND

1. Staten Island Justice Center

MANHATTAN

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

MULTI-BOROUGH

6. Legal Hand (Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens)

BRONX

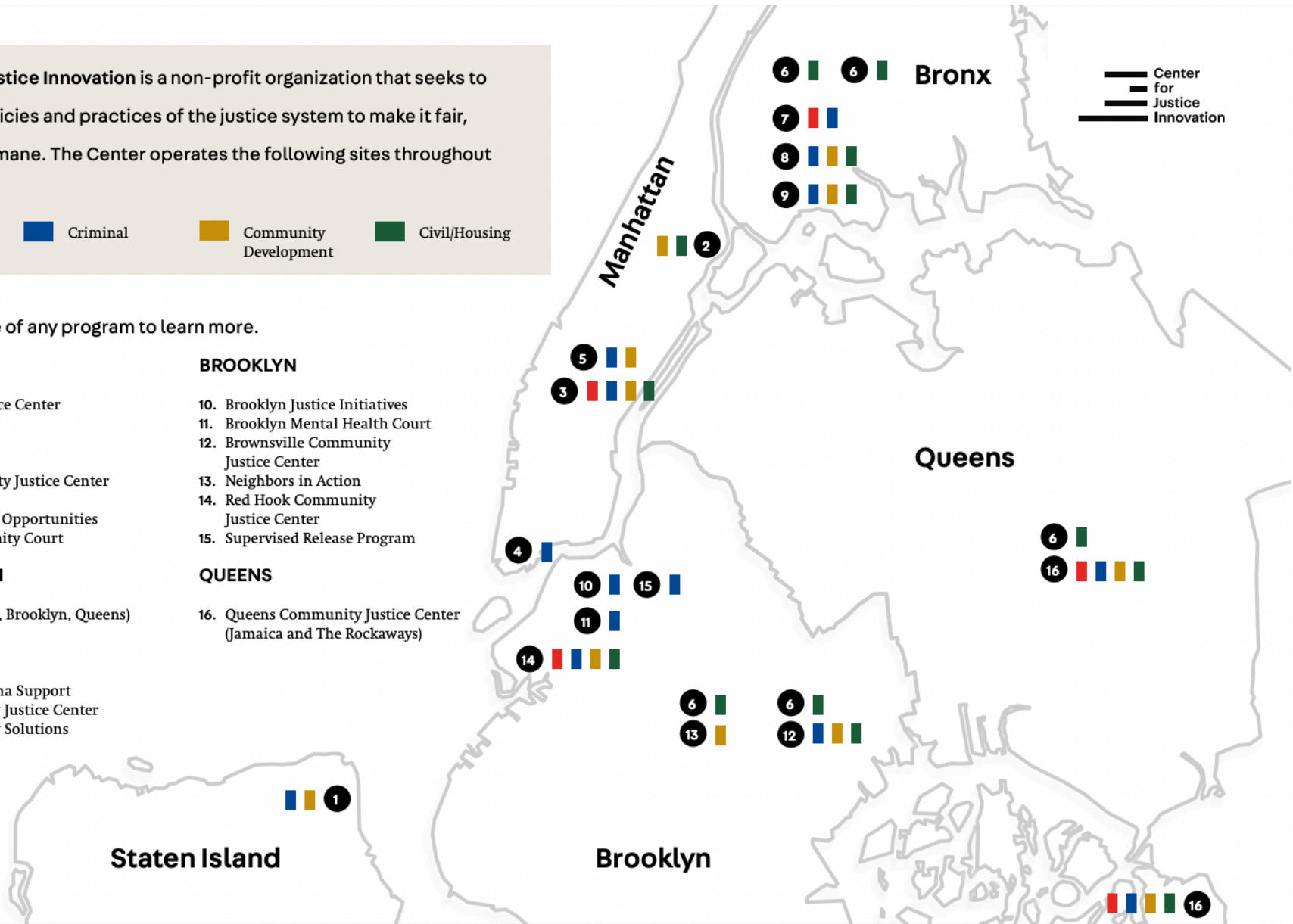
7. Bronx Child Trauma Support
8. Bronx Community Justice Center
9. Bronx Community Solutions

BROOKLYN

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

QUEENS

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



Citywide

- Access to Justice
- 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

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**Center for Justice Innovation
New York City Council
Committee on Housing and Buildings
March 24, 2026**

Good morning Chair Sanchez and esteemed members of the Committee on Housing and Buildings. My name is James Coger, and I serve as the Manager of Community Justice Connect Bronx, an initiative of the Center for Justice Innovation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Across New York City, housing challenges often emerge long before a case reaches housing court—whether through unresolved repair issues, confusion around tenant rights and responsibilities, or financial shocks that make it difficult to keep up with rent. Too often, these issues escalate because tenants and small property owners lack accessible, timely support to help them navigate complex systems and resolve problems early.

The Center for Justice Innovation’s work is grounded in the belief that housing stability is strengthened when people can access support early—within their communities and at key moments before challenges escalate. By providing practical tools, clear legal information, and connections to critical services, our programs help prevent housing crises before they begin. Embedding legal access, housing support, and service navigation directly in community settings and within the courts allows us to intervene at multiple points, addressing issues before they result in formal legal disputes or displacement. In doing so, we bridge gaps between communities, the courts, and the broader housing system, helping to reduce unnecessary court involvement while promoting more stable and equitable outcomes.

Today, I will highlight several initiatives that reflect this approach and demonstrate how targeted investments can strengthen housing stability, improve access to justice, and support more effective problem-solving across New York City’s housing landscape.

Harlem, Red Hook and Queens Community Justice Center’s Housing Resource Centers

The Center for Justice Innovation operates three Housing Resource Centers, located at the Red Hook Community Justice Center, the Harlem Community Justice Center, and Queens Community Justice Center in Far Rockaway, help tenants navigate housing court and address a wide-range of housing issues. In Harlem and Far Rockaway, the Housing Resource Centers include their own community-based housing court part. These Centers help seniors, non-English speakers, and private and public housing tenants obtain critical home repairs, preserve affordability, prevent evictions, and find justice and fair treatment in housing court.

In Red Hook, Harlem and Far Rockaway, the Housing Resource Centers serve a substantial portion of residents living in the nearby NYCHA developments. In 2025, the Centers collectively served thousands of households living in NYCHA, addressing a wide range of

housing-related needs. These services included support with Right to Counsel referrals, HRA One-Shot Deal applications, lease recertifications, housing court coordination, and identifying alternative housing to public housing. Through this work, the Housing Resource Centers serve as a critical access point for tenants navigating complex housing systems and facing housing instability.

A key component of eviction prevention is ensuring affordability. The Housing Resource Centers helps tenants with the annual and interim recertification process and ensure that rent is fairly calculated based on federal guidelines. In 2025, these housing teams helped over 900 NYCHA residents with lease recertifications. For many tenants, errors in their lease recertification process can lead to overcharging, resulting in them having to choose between being overcharged and paying more than they can reasonably afford or facing claims of unpaid rent, accruing debt, and potential eviction. Facilitating the lease recertification process reduces the likelihood of eviction by helping tenants avoid arrears and comply with NYCHA's recertification requirement. Staff supports tenants with lost income to adjust their rent, identify deductions they are eligible for, and connect residents to financial support via the Human Resources Administration's emergency rental assistance and public benefit applications. In 2025, the Harlem team alone assisted 123 residents with HRA applications to maintain their housing and access nutrition assistance.

The Housing Resource Centers also supports tenants with home repair issues, including both coordinating repair dates and trades directly with NYCHA and helping tenants file Housing Part (HP) Actions in court. In 2025, Housing Resource Centers helped over 200 residents navigate the process of filing HP Actions in the Justice Centers' housing courts. Tenant-driven court actions allow those facing chronic or unaddressed emergency repair needs to take their landlord to court. HRCs screen tenants for issues related to healthy housing, such as mold and lead paint hazards, and maintains close contact with impacted tenants, helping to monitor the status of repairs by conducting home visits to document repair needs and assisting with reasonable accommodation requests for tenants with chronic health conditions and disabilities. The program also helps tenants with non-payment cases raise repair issues as counterclaims in their court proceedings where warranted. Finally, the Housing Resource Centers promote the right to counsel by providing direct referrals to legal services.

Our housing teams also prioritize services for vulnerable populations, including community elders, people with disabilities, and residents facing language barriers. In 2025, 426 older adults visited Harlem's Help Center, with staff providing home visits, assistance with repair requests and reasonable accommodations, and referrals to services such as Meals-on-Wheels and Adult Protective Services. The Housing Resource Centers also help residents access virtual court proceedings, reducing barriers for those with mobility limitations or caregiving responsibilities.

With City Council funding, the Housing Resource Centers will continue their proven model of eviction prevention, housing stabilization, and tenant advocacy. They will expand support to tenants navigating landlord-tenant disputes through Virtual Court Access Network (VCAN) terminals (a partnership in Harlem and Red Hook with the court system that provides remote access to court clerks to respond to eviction proceedings or file affirmative cases for repairs, tenant harassment, or illegal lockouts). Funding will also support staffing efforts to reach traditionally underserved households with language barriers, seniors, and residents with disabilities.

The Center for Justice Innovation operates housing resource centers at both the Red Hook Community Justice Center and the Harlem Community Justice Center. These Centers help seniors, non-English speakers, private and public housing tenants obtain critical home repairs, preserve affordability, prevent evictions, and find justice and fair treatment in housing court.

In 2025, the Centers collectively served thousands of households, addressing a wide range of housing-related needs within their respective communities. These referrals included support with Right to Counsel connections, HRA One-Shot Deal applications, lease recertifications, housing court coordination, and identifying alternative housing to public housing. Through this work, the Housing Resource Centers serve as a critical access point for tenants navigating complex housing systems and facing housing instability.

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repairs, tenant harassment, or illegal lockouts). Funding will also support staffing efforts to reach traditionally underserved households with language barriers, seniors, and residents with disabilities.

Community Justice Connect

Community Justice Connect works to close the civil justice gap by providing free legal information, resources, and referrals to New Yorkers who do not have access to legal representation. Rather than waiting until a legal crisis reaches the courts, the program trains community volunteers to proactively help their neighbors understand civil legal issues, navigate forms and processes, and connect to legal services when needed.

Community Justice Connect currently operates out of storefront sites in Crown Heights, the South Bronx, and Jamaica, Queens; but it will soon co-locate within our Community Justice Centers for enhanced accessibility. Last year, Community Justice Connect saw more than 4,200 visits, trained 122 volunteers, and hosted 215 workshops on topics such as housing, public benefits, and consumer protections.¹ Housing issues are among the most common concerns, with volunteers helping residents understand housing court processes, address repairs, and preserve stable housing.

City Council funding will support continued volunteer training and enrichment across all three sites, including legal education, professional development workshops, and career readiness support. These investments will strengthen volunteers' ability to provide high-quality assistance to their communities while also building their own skills and employment opportunities. By expanding access to trusted legal information and community-based support, Community Justice Connect helps New Yorkers resolve problems earlier, strengthens community capacity, and prevents civil legal issues from becoming destabilizing crises.

Eviction Diversion Initiative

The Eviction Diversion Initiative works to transform housing court into a place where people can find support with complex needs and secure safe, stable housing. Instead of serving only as a place where eviction cases are processed, these programs position the court as a point of connection—linking tenants and landlords to the resources they need to resolve disputes and stabilize housing. The Eviction Diversion model shows that when courts are paired with the right services and community partnerships, they can do more than process cases—they can help prevent eviction, support stability, and strengthen communities.

The program brings services directly into the court process. Tenants and landlords can access legal assistance, rental and financial support, mediation, and housing navigation—all in real time and often in the same place where their case is being heard. Just as importantly, these programs connect people to broader, wraparound services like employment support, public benefits, and financial counseling, recognizing that eviction is often driven by underlying economic and social challenges. Program staff help clients navigate these systems by assessing individual needs, making tailored referrals, and providing warm handoffs to community-based providers, ensuring that people can access the right resources at critical moments in their case.

The Eviction Diversion Initiative operates at multiple stages of the eviction process, including before a case is filed, during court proceedings, and even after a case is resolved. This

¹ Center for Justice Innovation. (2026). Justice Center Application and Reset referral database. [Data file].

flexible, multi-entry approach allows courts to intervene early to prevent eviction or, when that is not possible, to reduce the harm associated with displacement by helping families secure new housing and maintain stability. In jurisdictions implementing the initiative, nearly 90 percent of cases were resolved without an eviction judgment. These programs were also found to increase trust and confidence in the justice system, improve appearance rates, expand access to critical resources, and help both tenants and landlords reach more sustainable outcomes.²

The Eviction Diversion Initiative was launched in 2022 by the Center for Justice Innovation and the New York State Unified Court System in Brooklyn Housing Court and Suffolk County District Courts, with support from the National Center for State Courts (NCSC). The Center is now working with the court system to expand the Initiative to the Bronx, Queens, and Manhattan in New York City.

Conclusion

The programs outlined today reflect a comprehensive approach to strengthening New York City's housing ecosystem—one that prioritizes early intervention, access to justice, and the resolution of issues before they escalate into eviction, unsafe living conditions, or prolonged legal disputes. By helping tenants navigate housing court, access legal information, address repair needs, and stabilize their housing situations, these initiatives improve outcomes not only for individual households but for communities as a whole.

Investments in these programs support a more efficient and equitable housing court process, reduce the burden on legal and enforcement systems, and ensure that both tenants and landlords have the tools and resources needed to reach sustainable resolutions. At a time when many New Yorkers continue to face housing insecurity and legal barriers, maintaining and expanding these services is essential to promoting safe, stable, and fair housing across the City.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your continued leadership in advancing policies and investments that strengthen housing stability and access to justice for all New Yorkers.

² *Reimagining Housing Court: A Framework for Eviction Diversion*. National Center for State Courts (2024, January) <https://www.ncsc.org/resources-courts/reimagining-housing-court-framework-eviction-diversion>



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Center for Justice Innovation FY27 Proposals

- **#2156900 - Center for Justice Innovation General Funds - \$750,000**

Innovative Criminal Justice Programs (Renewal); Speaker's Initiative

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.

Harlem Community Justice Center

- **#2243397 - Harlem Housing Help Center - \$20,000**

Member Item (Renewal)

Description: The Harlem Community Justice Center's Housing Help Center seeks funding from City Council Member Encarnacion and Council Member Salaam to empower tenants of Central and East Harlem to obtain critical home repairs, preserve affordability, prevent evictions, and find justice and fair treatment in housing court.

- **#2239645 - Harlem Housing Help Center - \$50,000**

Community Housing Preservation Strategies (New)

Description: The Harlem Community Justice Center’s Housing Help Center seeks funding from the Community Housing Preservation Strategies Initiative to empower tenants of Central and East Harlem to obtain critical home repairs, preserve affordability, prevent evictions, and find justice and fair treatment in housing court.

Red Hook Community Justice Center

- **#2246731 - RHCJC Housing Resource Center - \$50,000**

Community Safety and Victim Services (Renewal)

Description: The Red Hook Community Justice Center’s Housing Resource Center seeks funding from Council Member Aviles through the Community Safety and Victim Services initiative to help seniors, non-English speakers, and other public housing tenants in the Red Hook Houses obtain critical home repairs, preserve affordability, prevent evictions, and find justice and fair treatment in housing court. Additionally, with funding, the Housing Resource Center will expand support to tenants across District 38 in navigating landlord-tenant disputes through the Virtual Court Access Network (VCAN) terminals, which provide connection to downtown court clerks to respond to eviction proceedings, or file affirmative cases for repairs, tenant harassment, or illegal lockouts.

- **#2246695 - RHCJC Housing Resource Center - \$20,000**

Member Item (New)

Description: The Red Hook Community Justice Center’s Housing Resource Center seeks funding from Council Member Hanif to help seniors, non-English speakers, public housing tenants in the Gowanus & Wyckoff Houses, as well as residents in other types of housing facing housing instability, obtain critical home repairs, preserve affordability, prevent evictions, and find justice and fair treatment in housing court.

Community Justice Connect

- **#2197911 - Community Justice Connect Queens - \$20,000**

Member Item (New)

Description: Community Justice Connect (formerly known as Legal Hand) aims to narrow the civil justice gap by offering legal information and resources to Queens residents who do not have access to legal representation, or who are facing

civil issues that have not yet escalated into crises that require court intervention. Community Justice Connect uses a model in which volunteers, including students and retired professionals, who primarily reside in Queens, receive in-depth training, resources, and ongoing support from on-site managers, associates, and an attorney. This empowers them to provide their neighbors with free access to legal information and assistance. City Council funding will allow Community Justice Connect to continue and broaden its volunteer enrichment opportunities, providing professional skill development workshops, training sessions, and access to tailored resources to its volunteers, thereby fostering a stronger community justice network.

- **#2243502 - Community Justice Connect Bronx - \$20,000**

Member Item (New)

Description: Community Justice Connect (formerly known as Legal Hand) aims to narrow the civil justice gap by offering legal information and resources to Bronx residents who do not have access to legal representation, or who are facing civil issues that have not yet escalated into crises that require court intervention. Community Justice Connect uses a model in which volunteers, including students and retired professionals, who primarily reside in the South Bronx, receive in-depth training, resources, and ongoing support from on-site managers, associates, and an attorney. This empowers them to provide their neighbors with free access to legal information and assistance. City Council funding will allow Community Justice Connect to implement a Volunteer Enrichment Program at its Bronx site, providing professional skill development workshops, training sessions, and access to tailored resources to its volunteers, thereby fostering a stronger community justice network.

- **#2239906 - Community Justice Connect Crown Heights - \$20,000**

Member Item (New)

Description: Community Justice Connect (formerly known as Legal Hand) aims to narrow the civil justice gap by offering legal information and resources to Crown Heights residents who do not have access to legal representation, or who are facing civil issues that have not yet escalated into crises that require court intervention. Community Justice Connect uses a model in which volunteers, including students and retired professionals, who primarily reside in Crown Heights, receive in-depth training, resources, and ongoing support from on-site managers, associates, and an attorney. This empowers them to provide their neighbors with free access to legal information and assistance. City Council funding will allow Community Justice Connect to continue and broaden its volunteer

enrichment opportunities, providing professional skill development workshops, training sessions, and access to tailored resources to its volunteers, thereby fostering a stronger community justice network.

Neighborhood Safety Initiatives

- **#2252522 - Castle Hill Garden - \$25,000**

Member Item (New)

Description: Neighborhood Safety Initiatives (NSI) works to improve public safety and strengthen community well-being in New York City by investing in residents, transforming public spaces, and influencing policy. The key pillars that form the foundation of NSI's work are racial equity, shifting power, increasing access to resources, inclusive design, and deep community participation. NSI provides training to local residents in community organizing, human-centered design, and re-envisioning public spaces to promote people's well-being. With support from NSI and community partners such as GrowNYC and the Bronx Botanical Garden, hundreds of pounds of food were produced each year by the Castle Hill Houses Roxanne Reid Memorial Garden, both feeding the community and providing Castle Hill with a space that could be activated for educational activities and events. The Castle Hill Garden was funded and curated by GrowNYC for its first three years until funding ended. With the help of City Council discretionary funds, NSI aims to bring back the Castle Hill Garden for the benefit of the residents of Castle Hill Houses, a New York City Housing Authority development.

- **#2252732 - NSI Roosevelt Houses - \$25,000**

Member Item (New)

Description: Neighborhood Safety Initiatives (NSI) works to improve public safety and strengthen community well-being in New York City by investing in residents, transforming public spaces, and influencing policy. The key pillars that form the foundation of NSI's work are racial equity, shifting power, increasing access to resources, inclusive design, and deep community participation. NSI provides training to local residents in community organizing, human-centered design, and re-envisioning public spaces to promote people's well-being. With support from the City Council, NSI aims to improve community safety, public health, and community cohesion at Roosevelt Houses with the Roosevelt Houses Basketball Court Project, a renovation project of a 80 x 20 feet dilapidated basketball court located on Dekalb and Stuyvesant Avenues.

- **#2252642 - Morris Houses - \$50,000**

Member Item; NYC Clean Up (New)

Description: Neighborhood Safety Initiatives (NSI) works to improve public safety and strengthen community well-being in New York City by investing in residents, transforming public spaces, and influencing policy. The key pillars that form the foundation of NSI's work are racial equity, shifting power, increasing access to resources, inclusive design, and deep community participation. NSI provides training to local residents in community organizing, human-centered design, and re-envisioning public spaces to promote people's well-being. With support from the City Council, NSI aims to improve community safety, public health, and community cohesion at Morris Houses with the Morris Houses Basketball Court Project, which will turn the dilapidated basketball court into a multipurpose play area for all ages.



DARCEL D. CLARK

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
BRONX COUNTY

March 9, 2026

Speaker Julie Menin
New York City Council
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Speaker Menin and Members of City Council:

On behalf of the Bronx District Attorney's Office, I am pleased to write this letter in support of key Center for Justice Innovation (formerly, Center for Court Innovation) FY27 City Council Applications. Funding will expand:

- pre-arraignment early diversion options;
- mental health supports;
- restorative justice programming;
- human trafficking survivor leadership initiatives at the intersection of intimate partner violence and gun violence; and
- innovative pilot programs that address pressing needs in communities within the Bronx.

These programs will enable the Bronx to move towards our shared vision of reducing unnecessary and harmful involvement in the legal system wherever possible and allow us to build public safety through sustainable community-driven solutions.

For the past several years, the City Council has supported the Bronx with **\$710,000** to invest in early system diversion, which includes **Project Reset**, the Center's citywide pre-arraignment diversion model and same day at arraignments programming that re-directs New Yorkers with misdemeanor arrests from the court system. Project Reset Bronx includes borough-wide restorative justice circles to aid in diversion. This has offered relief from the collateral consequence's participants might otherwise experience if arraigned for low-level crimes. We support the Center in continuing to partner with the Council to implement the next generation of early system diversions for the Bronx to continue to lead the City in scaled restorative justice-based interventions. In 2025, Bronx Assist was launched, a promising pre-arraignment diversion program for certain Desk Appearance Ticket (DAT) arrests which is being piloted in the 44th Precinct with support from a two-year federal grant. CJI has demonstrated a willingness to partner on this project and has shown a willingness to see it succeed.

Thanks to meaningful changes in the treatment of trafficking victims in the justice system, the Center's **Bronx Human Trafficking Intervention Court (HTIC)** referrals continue to decline. **Project Healing and Empowerment through Advocacy and Leadership** (Project

HEAL) is a survivor leadership and peer support initiative for human trafficking survivors. Additionally, we support the Center's RISE Project which is used in Family Court and provides community-based intimate partner violence prevention services in communities most impacted by gun violence.

Since 2010, **Bronx Community Solutions (BCS)** has assisted all individuals ordered by court mandate to complete a screening and assessment, DWI treatment, and enrollment in the **Driver Accountability Program**. This initiative began at the request of the judiciary, who noted that participants were having difficulty navigating the complicated network of private providers of these statutorily mandated services.

Finally, we support continuation of the Center's **Innovative Core Funding** which addresses the immediate needs of all borough residents by piloting novel and effective approaches to anti-gun violence, victim services, and mental health services with diversion.

The Center has a long and documented history of conducting original research and operating direct service programs in the Bronx. Their mission to promote equality, dignity, and respect in communities aligns with my Office's vision. Together we can reimagine a fairer and more holistic approach to justice. We can do this by reducing incarceration as well as by building substantial and meaningful community-based support. I encourage the City Council to consider funding each of the Center's programs which will ultimately enhance fairness, accountability, and safety for the people of the Bronx.

Sincerely,



Darcel Clark



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
RICHMOND COUNTY

MICHAEL E. MCMAHON
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

March 3, 2026

Speaker Julie Menin
New York City Council
City Hall
New York, New York 10007

Re: Support for Center for Justice Innovation Fiscal Year 2027 Initiatives

Dear Speaker Menin and Members of the New York City Council:

I am pleased to offer my strong support for the Center for Justice Innovation's Fiscal Year 2027 funding request to expand alternatives to incarceration, provide enhanced mental health supports, develop early diversion programming at the intersection of intimate partner violence and gun violence, strengthen restorative reentry options for individuals and their families, expand pre-court eviction prevention initiatives, and pilot innovative programs that address pressing community needs across New York City. These initiatives represent thoughtful, evidence-based approaches that reduce unnecessary and harmful involvement in the justice system while advancing public safety through sustainable, community-driven solutions.

The Center for Justice Innovation has a long and well-documented history of conducting original research and implementing direct service programs that promote equality, dignity, and respect in communities across New York City, including Staten Island. These values closely align with the vision of the Richmond County District Attorney's Office. My office has proudly partnered with the Center in the development of the Staten Island Community Justice Center, an initiative designed to reduce crime and incarceration, strengthen community trust in the justice system, and promote safer, more equitable neighborhoods through community-driven public safety strategies, youth opportunity, and economic mobility initiatives.

To maintain existing operations while expanding programming, Justice Center staff will dedicate time and expertise to developing new initiatives, including designing data collection and evaluation strategies to measure program effectiveness and ensure accountability. Through this partnership, we continue to reimagine a more holistic and equitable approach to justice—one that emphasizes prevention, diversion, and meaningful community-based support alongside traditional court responses. Investment in the initiatives outlined above will allow this work to continue and expand its impact in Staten Island and throughout the city.

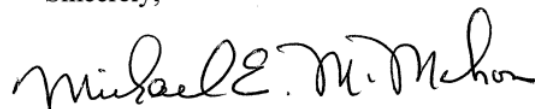
I also urge the Council to support **Youth Impact Staten Island**. Formerly known as Youth Court, Youth Impact is a dynamic youth leadership development program focused on peer mentorship, violence prevention, and restorative practices. The program works to keep young people engaged in school and out of the criminal legal system while fostering a youth-centered approach to community safety and healing. Through structured in-school partnerships and civic engagement opportunities, participants gain valuable skills in oral and written communication, facilitation, conflict resolution, and research. They also learn about the structure and impact of the justice system and receive training in community planning and organizing, empowering them to become leaders and advocates within their communities.

Continued investment is also critical to addressing the mental health needs of court-involved and at-risk youth. Individuals experiencing persistent and untreated mental illness must have access to culturally competent, trauma-informed mental health care. To address existing gaps in services for Staten Island youth, I urge the Council to continue and expand support for the Staten Island Justice Center's **Youth Wellness Initiative**. This program provides vital mental health services that promote healing and stability for young people involved in, or at risk of entering, the justice system. Importantly, the initiative also provides holistic support to families by offering resources and guidance to parents and caregivers of participating youth.

Finally, I support the continuation and expansion of the Center's **Driver Accountability Program**, which offers a constructive and restorative response to dangerous driving offenses. This program seeks to meaningfully change risky driving behavior among individuals charged with driving-related offenses in criminal court while promoting greater accountability and safer streets for all New Yorkers.

Thank you for your consideration of this request as the Council makes important funding decisions on behalf of the City of New York. If you have any questions, please contact Agency Chief Contracting Officer and Grants Coordinator Dr. Lisa Sloan at (718) 556-7089 or by email at Lisa.Sloan@rcda.nyc.gov.

Sincerely,



Michael E. McMahon
District Attorney

**DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF NEW YORK
ONE HOGAN PLACE
New York, N. Y. 10013
(212) 335-9000**



ALVIN L. BRAGG, JR.
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

March 20, 2026

Speaker Julie Menin
New York City Council
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Speaker Menin and Members of City Council,

I am writing to express my support for the important services The Center for Justice Innovation (formerly, the Center for Court Innovation) provides to help advance our public safety goals.

My office works closely with Manhattan Justice Opportunities (MJO) which offers case management services in Manhattan's Felony Alternatives-to-Incarceration Court. Pathways prosecutors also staff and work closely with providers in the Midtown Community Justice Center Misdemeanor Mental Health Court ("Midtown"). The case managers, resource coordinators, and social workers at Manhattan Justice Opportunities and Midtown's Misdemeanor Mental Health Court provide important connections to community-based resources, critical mental health and substance abuse interventions, case management, and monitoring for people charged with crimes. As a result of their work, we can address the underlying issues that may have driven participants' behavior and decrease the use of jail and prison in instances when we believe doing so may have a detrimental effect on public safety. MJO and Midtown are key partners in our public safety work.

Many of Midtown's Mental Health Court participants work with the peer navigators who staff Midtown's Community First Program. The navigators work to ensure that participants are connected to community-based services most critical to their continuing care during their mandate, and after graduating. Finally, our prosecutors regularly rely on the Center's Driver Accountability Program (DAP) to provide a constructive and restorative response to dangerous driving and work to change the risky driving behavior of people charged with driving-related offenses in criminal court. DAP is also addressing more serious cases through a second tier of programming, Circles for Safe Streets, which brings together drivers and their victims through a restorative justice process. Our office has referred appropriate cases to Circles for Safe Streets to give families who have lost loved ones in vehicular accidents or victims who have been seriously injured in accidents another option in their healing process.

Speaker Julie Menin
New York City Council

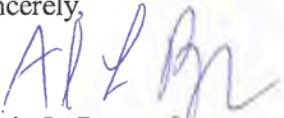
- 2 -

March 20, 2026

Finally, the Center supports staff working at Midtown on the Community First team, neighborhood forums focused on community safety, and Midtown's Youth Advisory Board whose members work with the Midtown team to understand issues facing young people in their community so that the Midtown team may work to address them through their community-based work. These are efforts my office support.

Please feel free to contact my office with any further questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Alvin L. Bragg, Jr.", is written over a light blue circular stamp.

Alvin L. Bragg, Jr.
Manhattan District Attorney



Testimony of
Coalition for the Homeless

before the Housing and Building Committee
of the New York City Council

on the

Housing and Building Committee's Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2027

submitted by

Alex Gomez
Campaign Coordinator
Coalition for the Homeless

March 24, 2026

The Coalition for the Homeless ("Coalition") welcomes this opportunity to submit testimony to the New York City Council's Committee on Housing and Buildings. As the court- and City-appointed independent monitor of

the Department of Homeless Services (“DHS”) shelter system and party in the historic Callahan, Eldredge, and Boston cases that created the right to shelter in New York City (“NYC”), we are uniquely situated to provide insight into the impact of proposed funding for affordable housing and related programs serving all unhoused New Yorkers.

Priced Out of New York City

New York City has one of the largest populations of unhoused people in the United States. In January 2026, there were 100,437 people sleeping in New York City shelters each night on average, including 33,217 children.¹ This staggeringly high figure does not include the thousands of individuals sleeping unsheltered on the streets and other public spaces, nor the well over 200,000 individuals living doubled-up or tripled-up in the homes of other²step before turning to the shelters or the streets.³ As such, the number of people without homes in New York City has never been higher.

These alarming statistics have been fueled by decades of underinvestment in permanent affordable housing for extremely low-income families and the failure of all levels of government to enact policies to meaningfully reverse this trend. The affordable housing shortage in NYC, particularly for extremely low-income (ELI) households, those earning 30 percent or below of the Area Median Income (AMI), is underscored by the stark data revealing the depth of the crisis. Seventy-three percent of ELI households in the New York City area are severely rent-burdened, meaning they pay more than 50 percent of their gross income toward rent.⁴ With virtually no apartments available at rents affordable to ELI households, the consequence is predictable: a shelter system originally designed for temporary stays has become a de facto housing provider of last resort.

The worsening housing precarity in NYC is further evidenced by persistently high eviction rates. From 2020 to 2025, the ten ZIP codes with the highest eviction rates, ranging from 33 to 43 percent of households, were concentrated in the Bronx, where more than half of households earn below \$53,000.⁵ Coupled with the near-total absence of available affordable housing, this surge in evictions has made a substantial and continued increase in mass homelessness a near-inevitability.

Despite record levels of “affordable” housing production in recent years, the vast majority of City-subsidized units are categorically unavailable to homeless and ELI households, not because they earn too much, but because they earn too little. As described in Coalition’s policy brief, *Build From the Bottom Up: Affordable Housing for Homeless New Yorkers*, from 2014 to 2024, only 21 percent of new affordable rental units financed by the City were available to ELI households, amounting to just 22,565 units over an entire decade.⁶ Meanwhile, 69,572 new units were financed for households earning between 51 and 165 percent of AMI.⁷ In 2024, the largest share of

¹ Coalition for the Homeless, “How Many People Are Homeless In NYC?,” *About Homelessness In New York*, March 2026, <https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/how-many-total-people-are-homeless-in-nyc/>.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ National Low Income Housing Coalition. *The GAP Report 2025: A Shortage of Affordable Homes*. The GAP. New York, NY, 2025. <https://nlihc.org/gap>.

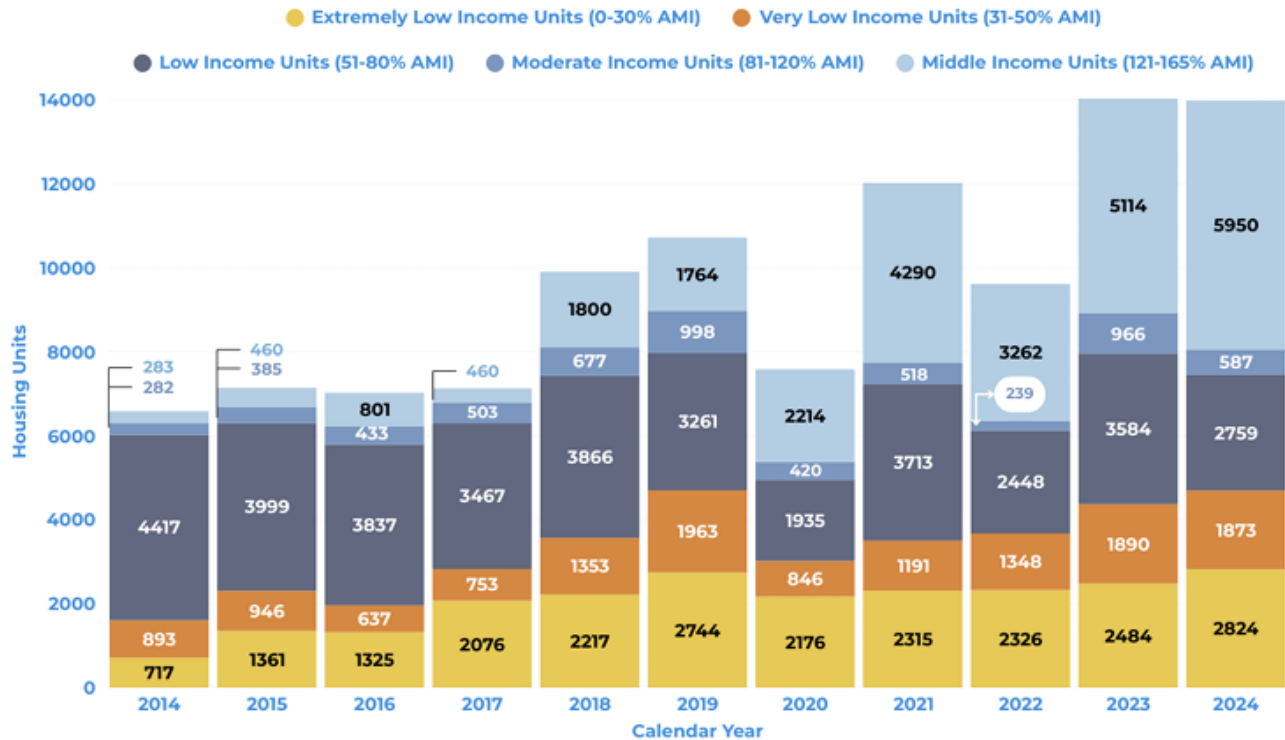
⁵ Vasquez, Jade. *Evictions Up, Representation Down: How New York City Is Undermining the Right to Counsel*. New York, New York: Office of the New York City Comptroller, 2025. <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/evictions-up-representation-down/>.

⁶ Coalition for the Homeless, *Build From the Bottom Up: Affordable Housing for Homeless New Yorkers* (New York, New York, 2026), 5, <https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/build-from-the-bottom-up/>.

⁷ *Ibid.* Pg 5

City-funded "affordable" units was restricted to households earning between 121 and 165 percent of AMI,⁸ meaning a single mother with two children would need to earn at least \$118,096 annually to qualify. This creates a cruel irony: those who are homeless or most severely rent-burdened are systematically excluded from the very housing programs the City funds in their name.

Figure 1. Number of New Affordable Rental Units Financed by Income Band and Calendar Year (2014 - 2024)



Source: Calculations based on data from NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development, "Affordable Housing Production by Building," accessed via NYC Open Data.

Note: These figures do not include affordable housing preservations or supportive housing production.

Reverse the Trend: Budget Recommendations

New York City must prioritize investing in deeply affordable housing, specifically for those who are currently homeless and extremely low-income households at imminent risk of homelessness. Such investments are even more necessary now, given catastrophic federal funding cuts and changes in federal housing and homeless policies that will undermine housing stability for many who are housed, further increasing the demand for housing that is affordable. The underlying cause of mass homelessness in New York City is a shortage of rental housing for the lowest income residents. This homelessness crisis will continue to grow unless the City corrects the misalignment between the greatest need for affordable housing and the priorities for affordable housing production.

⁸ Coalition for the Homeless, *Build From the Bottom Up: Affordable Housing for Homeless New Yorkers* (New York, New York, 2026), 7, <https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/build-from-the-bottom-up/>.

To start, the City must commit to prioritizing the creation of 12,000 units of truly affordable housing per year for the next five years—for a total of 60,000 units available only to homeless and extremely low-income households on the brink of homelessness. To ensure that homeless and ELI households are duly considered for affordable housing, the City must dedicate capital funds specifically for housing production for homeless and ELI New Yorkers.

Concentrating capital investment to create housing for the lowest-income New Yorker is not only morally correct, but will have a more significant impact in alleviating homelessness and the affordable housing crisis. Research continues to show that rising rates of homelessness are not fundamentally a housing supply issue that can be solved only by increasing supply.⁹ A common argument is that building more housing for renters at all income levels in New York City will result in more apartments becoming available to the lowest-income renters through the process of “filtering down.”¹⁰ However, trickle down housing policies will not work in New York City—especially for the city’s lowest-income residents. This is because of flawed assumptions about property depreciation and the pressures pushing housing prices upward, including speculative real estate investment,¹¹ and the amount of time this approach would need to take effect. But even where it does work in other cities, filtering down is an extremely slow process. The most optimistic analyses suggest that it can take more than 20 years for a market-rate unit to become affordable to a household at 60 percent AMI—still well out of reach for extremely low-income households.¹²

We appreciate the Council’s efforts to increase affordable housing for the lowest income New Yorkers through the passage of Local Law 66 of 2026, mandating that 30 percent of all new housing developments financed by the Department of Housing and Preservation Development (HPD) after July 2027 be affordable for ELI households. However, that law must be paired with a sufficient capital commitment to ensure that units are actually built.

While making this historic investment in deeply subsidized affordable units is critical, these efforts alone will not address the aforementioned gap that has resulted in an average of 100,437 people sleeping in shelters each night and hundreds of thousands of extremely low-income households that are severely rent burdened. Therefore, at the same time, the City must continue to invest in preserving the existing affordable housing stock, repairing and utilizing all vacant housing units, and ensuring that affordable housing projects remain stable over the long-term in order that fewer households require shelter.

New York City’s crisis of mass homelessness will continue to worsen without significant investments in housing for the people who need it most. Targeting housing investments to the tightest segment of the market is both logical and necessary. Creating units for the lowest-income households produces the largest and most immediate rent-burden relief for those renters and the renters most proximate to them and reduces the burden on the City’s shelter system.

⁹ Chris Schildt, “To Solve the Housing Affordability Crisis, Communities Must Confront Inequality,” *Shelterforce*, March 4, 2026, <https://shelterforce.org/2026/03/04/to-solve-the-housing-affordability-crisis-communities-must-confront-inequality/>.

¹⁰ Ratcliff, Richard U. “Filtering down and the Elimination of Substandard Housing.” *The Journal of Land & Public Utility Economics* 21, no. 4 (1945): 322–30. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3159005>.

¹¹ Greenberg, David M., Julia Duranti-Martínez, Francisca Winston, Spenser Anderson, Jacob Udell, Caroline Kirk, and Richard D. Hendra. “Housing Speculation, Affordable Investments, and Tenant Outcomes in New York City.” *Cityscape* 26, no. 1 (2024): 153–78. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48766076>.

¹² Ward, Jason M., George Zuo, and Yael Katz. *Supporting Housing Affordability in New York City Through Increased Housing Production: A Policy Brief*. 2023. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA2775-1.html.

About Coalition for the Homeless

Founded in 1981, Coalition is a not-for-profit advocacy and direct services organization that assists more than 3,500 homeless and at-risk New Yorkers each day. The Coalition advocates for proven, cost-effective solutions to address the crisis of modern homelessness, which is now in its fifth decade. The Coalition also protects the rights of homeless people through litigation involving the right to emergency shelter, the right to vote, the right to reasonable accommodations for those with disabilities, and life-saving housing and services for homeless people living with mental illnesses and HIV/AIDS.

The Coalition operates 12 direct-services programs that offer vital services to homeless, at-risk, and low-income New Yorkers. These programs also demonstrate effective, long-term, scalable solutions and include: permanent housing for formerly homeless families and individuals living with HIV/AIDS; job-training for homeless and low-income women; and permanent housing for formerly homeless families and individuals. Our summer sleep-away camp and after-school program help hundreds of homeless children each year. The Coalition's mobile soup kitchen distributed nearly 400,000 hot, nutritious meals to homeless and hungry people on the streets of the city this past year – up from our usual 320,000. Finally, our Crisis Services Department assists more than 1,000 homeless and at-risk households each month with eviction prevention, individual advocacy, referrals for shelter and emergency food programs, and assistance with public benefits as well as basic necessities such as diapers, formula, work uniforms, and money for medications and groceries. Since the pandemic, we have been operating a special Crisis Hotline (1-888-358-2384) for homeless individuals who need immediate help finding shelter or meeting other critical needs.

The Coalition was founded in concert with landmark right-to-shelter litigation filed on behalf of homeless men and women (*Callahan v. Carey* and *Eldredge v. Koch*) and remains a plaintiff in these now consolidated cases. In 1981, the City and State entered into a consent decree in *Callahan* through which they agreed: “The City defendants shall provide shelter and board to each homeless man who applies for it provided that (a) the man meets the need standard to qualify for the home relief program established in New York State; or (b) the man by reason of physical, mental or social dysfunction is in need of temporary shelter.” The *Eldredge* case extended this legal requirement to homeless single women. The *Callahan* consent decree and the *Eldredge* case also guarantee basic standards for shelters for homeless men and women.

Pursuant to the decree, the Coalition serves as the independent court-appointed monitor of municipal shelters for homeless single adults, and the City has also authorized the Coalition to monitor the municipal shelter system serving homeless families. In 2017, the Coalition, fellow institutional plaintiff Center for Independence of the Disabled – New York, and homeless New Yorkers with disabilities were represented by Legal Aid and pro-bono counsel White & Case in the settlement of *Butler v. City of New York*, which is designed to ensure that the right to shelter includes accessible accommodations for those with disabilities, consistent with Federal, State, and local laws. During the pandemic, the Coalition worked with Legal Aid to support homeless New Yorkers, including through the *E.G. v. City of New York* Federal class action litigation initiated to ensure Wi-Fi access for students in DHS and HRA shelters, as well as *Fisher v. City of New York*, a lawsuit filed in New York State Supreme Court to ensure homeless single adults gain access to private hotel rooms instead of congregate shelters during the pandemic.

Good morning. My name is Antony. From 2019 to 2021, I lived in New York City's shelter system. Thank you, Chair Sanchez and members of the Housing and Buildings Committee, for holding this hearing and for giving me the chance to speak.

I am here because this city is failing the people who need it most—and I was one of them.

I am calling on this Council and this administration to commit to creating 12,000 units of truly affordable housing every year for the next five years—60,000 units total—reserved exclusively for homeless New Yorkers and extremely low-income households on the brink of homelessness.

That means capital investment directed specifically at deeply affordable housing—not moderate-income housing, not market-rate subsidies—housing for the people who have nowhere else to go.

I shouldn't have had to enter shelter to get a CityFHEPS apartment. I wanted to find one on my own. The facility I was placed in was a harm reduction program. The idea is to keep people alive. But what I saw was staff that was confrontational and disrespectful—where I had to watch my own back every single day. When I documented and reported problems, I faced retaliation. Despite all of that—I kept going. And in 2021, I was connected to a CityFHEPS voucher.

While in shelter I applied through Housing Connect. I was told I won the housing lottery and was matched with a unit I liked—and then I was told someone else took the apartment. After everything I had survived, I still couldn't win.

Here's why: there are simply not enough deeply affordable units for people like me. When supply is this scarce, brokers and building managers can choose—and they do. Someone who never spent a night in shelter, but who is also extremely low-income, looks like a safer bet. That discrimination exists because there isn't enough housing for extremely low-income families. And that reality is psychologically devastating. It discourages people from even trying.

The root cause of mass homelessness in New York City is not a lack of effort from people like me. It is a shortage of rental housing for the lowest-income New Yorkers.

This crisis will keep growing unless the City changes its priorities.

We need more affordable housing for homeless people.

Thank you.

Dear Chair Sanchez, and Members of the Housing and Building's Committee,

My name is Denton Hutchinson, and I am currently in shelter. Thank you for holding the budget hearing on March 24th, 2026, and for allowing me the opportunity to submit testimony.

I am writing because we need more affordable housing for people who are homeless or extremely low-income. I've lived for almost seven years in shelter, surviving two bouts of cancer in that time. I have been stuck in shelter because I haven't been able to find housing that I could afford, and have had no way to get benefits that could help pay the astronomical rents in New York City.

People in shelter, like me, need more options to exit shelter. I don't qualify for CityFHEPS, one of the largest drivers of permanent housing placement for people in shelter. But I can apply for housing on Housing Connect. However, there are not enough ELI and homeless set-aside units. But I see a lot of units available to people who make six figures or more.

The underlying cause of mass homelessness in New York City is a shortage of rental housing for the lowest income residents. This homelessness crisis will continue to grow unless the City corrects the misalignment between the greatest need for affordable housing and the priorities for affordable housing production.

The City must commit to creating 12,000 units of truly affordable housing per year for the next five years—for a total of 60,000 units available only to homeless and extremely low-income households on the brink of homelessness. New York City must prioritize investing capital specifically for deeply affordable housing—specifically for those who are currently homeless and extremely low-income households at imminent risk of homelessness.

Without this investment, more people will enter shelters, and less people will exit. I urge the administration and this Council to right this wrong and give homeless New Yorkers more opportunities to get permanent affordable housing.

Thank you.

Denton Hutchinson

Dear Chair Sanchez, and Members of the Housing and Building's Committee,

My name is Kassi Keith, and I am currently in shelter. Thank you for holding the budget hearing on March 24th, 2026, and for allowing me the opportunity to submit testimony.

I am writing because we need more affordable housing for people who are homeless or extremely low-income. I've been homeless since 2017. I'm now waiting, hopefully, for a HAVP voucher. I became homeless because I was priced out of my apartment that I lived in for 10 years, even though I had a full-time job. It was heartbreaking.

I entered the shelter two years after I became homeless. And because I don't qualify for CityFHEPS, I have very few options to find permanent housing and exit shelter. During my two years of living with others in cramped spaces, I became incredibly sick and depressed.

Losing my apartment took a toll on my physical health which led me to lose my job. Eventually, the stress was so acute, I attempted suicide. I'm sharing this to emphasize the consequences of being in my position.

Being in the shelter has only made my health worse. And I can no longer work due to my health issues. However, I am on a fixed income and would qualify for a homeless set-aside unit. But there are not enough, and the process is a mystery. If there were enough affordable housing for extremely low-income households today, or homeless set-aside units, I would have more pathways to exit shelter and finally be able to focus on my health.

If there were enough affordable housing for ELI households when I was getting priced out of my apartment, I might have never had to enter the shelter or attempted suicide. I wish affordable housing was available to me because at the moment it feels like there is nowhere else to go.

The underlying cause of mass homelessness in New York City is a shortage of rental housing for the lowest income residents. This homelessness crisis will continue to grow unless the City corrects the misalignment between the greatest need for affordable housing and the priorities for affordable housing production.

The City must commit to creating 12,000 units of truly affordable housing per year for the next five years—for a total of 60,000 units available only to homeless and extremely low-income households on the brink of homelessness. New York City must prioritize investing capital specifically for deeply affordable housing—specifically for those who are currently homeless and extremely low-income households at imminent risk of homelessness.

Without this investment, more people will enter shelters, and less people will exit. I urge the administration and this Council to right this wrong and give homeless New Yorkers more opportunities to get permanent affordable housing.

Thank you.

Kassi Keith

Dear Chair Sanchez, and Members of the Housing and Building's Committee,

My name is Kat Corbell, and I was homeless for over a decade. In that time, I was in and out of shelter, on and off the streets, and staying on multiple couches and spare beds. Thank you for holding the budget hearing on March 24th, 2026, and for allowing me the opportunity to submit testimony.

The City must commit to creating 12,000 units of truly affordable housing per year for the next five years—for a total of 60,000 units available only to homeless and extremely low-income households on the brink of homelessness. New York City must prioritize investing capital specifically for deeply affordable housing—specifically for those who are currently homeless and extremely low-income households at imminent risk of homelessness.

I am writing because I became homeless due to the high cost of housing in the city and my disability. I have, at times, been able to hold down jobs, but jobs are hard to come by and don't pay enough. Therefore, I can't afford market-rate housing. Nor can I afford apartments currently on Housing Connect because the majority of them are too expensive, and I don't qualify.

Affordable housing was never truly available to me. At one point a housing navigator told me it would take eight years, in her best estimation, for an ELI or homeless person to get an affordable unit. I've had a profile since 2012, going through multiple iterations of the Housing Connect. And I've never been offered a dignified apartment. This isn't an issue of preference—it's a supply issue. If there was enough ELI housing and homeless set-aside units, I would have been offered a dignified apartment long ago.

The underlying cause of mass homelessness in New York City is a shortage of rental housing for the lowest income residents. This homelessness crisis will continue to grow unless the City corrects the misalignment between the greatest need for affordable housing and the priorities for affordable housing production.

We need more capital investment in affordable housing specifically for income-restricted ELI units and homeless set-aside units. Not for moderate- or middle-income households, nor market-rate subsidies. We need investments for the people who need it most, not for those who have so many options for housing.

Without this investment, more people will enter shelters, and less people will exit. I urge the administration and this Council to right this wrong and give homeless New Yorkers more opportunities to get permanent affordable housing.

Thank you.

Kat Corbell



Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness
for Women and their Children

**Testimony of Win (Formerly Women in Need, Inc.) for the New York City Council
Committee on Housing and Buildings Preliminary Budget Hearing
March 24th, 2026**

Thank you, Chair Sanchez, and the esteemed members of the Committee on Housing and Buildings for the opportunity to submit testimony on the Fiscal Year 2027 budget. My name is Jade Vasquez, and I am the Director of Policy and Research at Win, the largest provider of shelter and supportive housing to families with children in New York City and the nation. We operate 16 shelters and nearly 500 supportive housing units across the five boroughs. Each night, nearly 7,000 people call Win “home,” including 3,600 children.

Today, as our city faces its worst affordability crisis, more than 100,000 New Yorkers, including 33,000 children, are experiencing homelessness.¹ The underlying cause of mass homelessness in New York City is a shortage of rental housing for the lowest income residents. This homelessness crisis will continue to grow unless the City corrects the misalignment between the greatest need for affordable housing and the priorities for affordable housing production.

The City must commit to creating 12,000 units of truly affordable housing per year for the next five years—for a total of 60,000 units available only to homeless and extremely low-income households on the brink of homelessness. New York City must prioritize investing capital for deeply affordable housing— specifically for those who are currently homeless and extremely low-income households at imminent risk of homelessness.

Approximately 73% of extremely low-income households in the New York City area are severely rent-burdened— making households vulnerable to homelessness because of any event like job loss, or illness in the family.² Despite record levels of “affordable” housing production in recent years, most of the “affordable” housing created by the City excludes households who are homeless and extremely low-income. New Yorkers who are homeless or severely rent-burdened and at imminent risk of being homeless, are categorically barred from most City-subsidized “affordable” units—not because they earn too much, but because they earn too little.

For example, between 2014 and 2024, New York City financed only 2,000 units per year for extremely low-income and homeless households—four times fewer than higher-income households. In 2024, the largest share of new “affordable” units funded by the City were for households earning six figures.³

All families need a safe and decent place to live where they don’t have to choose between paying rent or being able to put food on the table. If a household’s income is extremely low, or if members of the household are disabled or otherwise unable to work, homelessness should not be the result. It is evident that New York City’s “trickle down housing policies” have not been working for the city’s lowest-income residents. We urge the Mamdani Administration and this



Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness
for Women and their Children

Council to right this wrong and give homeless and extremely low-income New Yorkers more opportunities to access permanent affordable housing. Thank you.

¹ “Facts About Homelessness,” *Coalition For The Homeless*, last updated January 2026,
<https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/facts-about-homelessness/>.

² “The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes,” *National Low Income Housing Coalition*, March 2026,
<https://nlihc.org/gap>.

³ “Build From the Bottom Up: Affordable Housing for Homeless New Yorkers,” *Coalition For The Homeless*,
<https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/build-from-the-bottom-up/>.



**Testimony of Chelsea Rose
Policy & Advocacy Manager
Care For the Homeless**

**Provided to the New York City Council
Preliminary Budget Hearing:
Committee on Housing and Buildings
March 24th, 2026**

My name is Chelsea Rose, and I serve as Policy and Advocacy Manager at Care For the Homeless (CFH). I would like to thank the Housing and Buildings Committee Chair, Pierina Ana Sanchez, and all committee members for the opportunity to testify today on the City's Preliminary Budget.

Care For the Homeless has over 40 years of experience providing medical and behavioral health services exclusively to people experiencing homelessness in New York City. We operate 17 federally qualified health centers in all five boroughs. Our service sites are co-located at facilities operated by other non-profits, including shelters for single adults and families, assessment centers, soup kitchens, and drop-in centers. Additionally, our community-based health center model brings services directly to neighborhoods where the need is most significant. Both models reduce barriers unhoused New Yorkers regularly face in navigating a complex health care system by increasing access to high-quality, patient-centered health services.

In addition to our health centers, Care For the Homeless operates two shelters for single adult women, two shelters for single adult men, and one Safe Haven. Each of the shelters has an on-site health center for the residents and for the community. In these programs, our goal is to end episodes of homelessness by providing essential supportive services to help our residents obtain stable and permanent housing.

Today, I'd like to highlight the urgent need for significantly greater investment in deeply affordable housing for people experiencing homelessness and extremely low-income New Yorkers. Without housing that people struggling to pay rent or leaving shelter can actually afford, homelessness will continue to grow regardless of how many "affordable" units the city finances.

The Scale of the Homelessness Crisis

New York City is currently facing an ever-growing homelessness crisis. DHS Daily reports indicate that more than 80,000 people sleep in New York City shelters each night, including tens of thousands of children. As of March 2026, families with children make up approximately 65 percent of households living in the City's shelter system.¹ These numbers offer only a snapshot and do not capture the many New Yorkers dealing with unstable housing outside of the shelter system or one crisis away from losing their housing.



Homelessness continues to grow because the housing market is increasingly out of reach for the lowest-income New Yorkers.

Across New York City:

- More than half of renter households are rent burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on rent.
- Over 1 million households are rent burdened citywide.²

For extremely low-income households, the situation is even more severe. Many pay more than half of their income toward rent, leaving them one financial shock, such as illness, job loss, or family crisis, away from homelessness.

For the patients we serve, housing instability is not an abstract policy issue. It is a daily health crisis. In our health centers, we see patients whose diabetes, asthma, and mental health conditions worsen because they are living in shelter or cycling between unstable housing situations. Even when patients receive high-quality medical care, it is extremely difficult to manage chronic conditions without stable housing. Individuals who have experienced homelessness often have a life expectancy that is 15 – 30 years shorter than their housed counterparts.³

Housing instability directly contributes to poorer health outcomes, higher emergency room utilization, and barriers to accessing consistent care.

Simply put: housing is health care.

The Affordable Housing Supply Crisis

A fundamental driver of homelessness in New York City is a severe shortage of housing that is affordable to people with the lowest incomes. The city's most recent Housing and Vacancy Survey found a vacancy rate of just 1.4 percent; the lowest level recorded since 1968.⁴ Housing options are even more scarce at the bottom of the rental market.

For apartments renting under \$1,100 per month, the price range most affordable to extremely low-income households; the vacancy rate was just 0.39 percent.⁵ Research from the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development shows that only about 7 percent of available vacant units are affordable to the lowest-income renters, even though a majority of rent-burdened households would need units in that price range to avoid housing instability.⁶

This local shortage reflects a broader structural problem. Nationally, there are only 35 affordable and available homes for every 100 extremely low-income renters, meaning that even when units exist at lower price points, they are often out of reach.⁷ Many units that are technically "affordable" are occupied by higher-income households, leaving extremely low-income renters, including those exiting shelters, to compete for a severely limited number of homes.



While New York City finances thousands of “affordable” housing units each year, most are not affordable to people exiting shelters or living on extremely low-incomes. Many housing lotteries require incomes far above what people leaving shelter earn. As a result, the households most affected by the housing crisis are often locked out of the very housing programs intended to address it.

This mismatch between what housing costs and what New Yorkers can afford is one of the key drivers of the city’s homelessness crisis. Without targeted investment in deeply affordable housing and rental assistance, homelessness will continue to rise because the private market does not produce housing at rents that extremely low-income households can afford.

The Production Gap

The issue is not just a lack of housing production. It is a mismatch between who the housing is being built for and who needs it most. Many housing lotteries require incomes far above what people leaving shelter earn. As a result, many New Yorkers are effectively locked out of these developments, not because they earn too much, but because they earn too little.

Housing affordability is typically defined using Area Median Income (AMI), a regional benchmark that does not reflect what low-income New Yorkers actually earn. In New York City, the 2025 AMI for a three-person household is \$145,800, meaning 30 percent of AMI is approximately \$43,740. Households earning at or below this level are considered extremely low-income.⁸

Because city-subsidized housing is structured around AMI bands, most units are targeted to households earning far above this level. Many developments set not only maximum income limits, but also minimum income requirements. For example, units designated for households earning up to 60 percent of AMI may require applicants to earn no less than approximately 50 percent of AMI, automatically excluding lower-income households.⁹ In practice, this means that much of the City’s “affordable” housing is not simply unaffordable to extremely low-income New Yorkers, but categorically unavailable to them.

This structural mismatch is reflected in how housing has been produced over time. From 2014 to 2024, only 21 percent of newly financed affordable rental units were available to extremely low-income households, totaling just 22,565 units over a decade. In contrast, 69,572 units were produced for households earning between 51 and 165 percent of AMI during the same period.⁹

Even today, the largest share of new “affordable” housing production is concentrated at the highest income bands. In 2024, a significant portion of units were targeted to households earning between 121 and 165 percent of AMI, requiring incomes far exceeding \$100,000 annually for a family of three.⁹ Meanwhile, New Yorkers experiencing homelessness or living on extremely low incomes remain locked out of these opportunities.



This production gap is a key driver of the City's homelessness crisis. Without sufficient housing targeted to the lowest-income households, people remain trapped in shelter or cycling through unstable housing situations. As a result, the shelter system increasingly functions as a de facto housing provider of last resort rather than a temporary intervention.⁹

The City Council has recognized this imbalance through policies like Local Law 66, which requires that 30 percent of new affordable housing units serve extremely low-income households.¹⁰ However, mandates alone are not enough. Without the capital investment necessary to finance housing at or below 30 percent of AMI, these requirements risk falling short of their intended impact.

Recommendation: Build Deeply Affordable Housing

For this reason, Care For the Homeless urges the city to use the FY2027 capital budget to significantly increase investment in deeply affordable housing.

Specifically, the city must commit in the FY2027 capital budget to:

- Building at least 12,000 units of deeply affordable housing per year for the next five years, for a total of 60,000 units available only to households experiencing homelessness or extremely low-income New Yorkers.

Expanding access to permanent housing is not only the right thing to do; it is also fiscally responsible. Investments in permanent housing reduce shelter stays, stabilizes vulnerable households, and improves long-term health outcomes.

Conclusion

The current moment presents a critical opportunity for New York City to align its housing investments with the needs of New Yorkers most affected by the housing crisis.

If New York City is serious about addressing homelessness, it must build housing that people experiencing unstable housing can actually afford. That means prioritizing deeply affordable housing in the City's capital investments and building from the bottom up, starting with the households facing the greatest housing instability and the highest risk of homelessness.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and your continued commitment to the health, safety, and dignity of every New Yorker.

If you have any questions, please reach out to Chelsea Rose, crose@cfhnyc.org.

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**Testimony of Hattie Fernandez
Consumer Advisory Board Member
Care For the Homeless**

**Provided to the New York City Council
Preliminary Budget Hearing:
Committee on Housing and Buildings
March 24th, 2026**

Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Hattie Fernandez, and I am on the Consumer Advisory Board at Care For the Homeless. I am currently experiencing homelessness and my health, safety, and dignity have all been affected by the housing crisis here in New York.

I lived in my apartment for 15 years. When my children became adults and left home, I stayed. Over time, the rent kept rising. My one-bedroom eventually reached \$2,000 a month. I live with arthritis, and when I experienced medical issues and became unemployed, I fell behind on rent and was evicted in June.

Living out of a bag, with my life in storage, has made it hard to take care of my health. It is hard to exercise for my arthritis. It is hard to feel safe. And it is hard to hold onto your dignity when your housing is gone.

I did what the system tells people to do. I applied for rental assistance programs and went through housing court. My case stayed in housing court for months. But I was rejected for a housing voucher while my eviction was pending. I only received a voucher in October. After I had already lost my home and owed \$20,000. By then, the damage was done.

My story is personal, but it is not unique. Too many New Yorkers are facing rents that are far beyond what working people, seniors, or people with health challenges can afford.

We need the city to invest in truly affordable housing. Invest in homes that people with low incomes can actually afford without having to choose between rent, health care, and basic needs. Increasing the supply of deeply affordable housing is essential if we want to prevent more people from falling into homelessness.

At the same time, we also need stronger tools to prevent eviction in the first place. Programs like CityFHEPS can help people stay housed, but too often assistance comes after someone has already lost their home.



If help had been available earlier, I might never have lost mine.

Housing is more than a roof over your head. It is stability, health, safety, and dignity.

The City must commit to creating 12,000 units of truly affordable housing per year for the next five years—for a total of 60,000 units available only to homeless and extremely low-income households on the brink of homelessness.

No one should have to lose their home before they qualify for help.

Thank you for listening to my story.



Testimony to the Housing and Buildings Committee
Budget Hearing
March 2026

My name is Sara Newman, and I am the Deputy Executive Director for the Open Hearts Initiative, an organization that builds solidarity between homeless and housed neighbors in communities throughout the city. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the Committee on Housing and Buildings. I am here because we need more affordable housing for people who are homeless or extremely low-income.

New York City must prioritize investing capital specifically for deeply affordable housing—specifically for those who are currently homeless and extremely low-income households at imminent risk of homelessness. With over 100,000 people sleeping in city shelters each night and many more at risk of homelessness, this need is urgent. I’m asking the city to commit to creating 12,000 units of truly affordable housing per year for the next five years—for a total of 60,000 units available to homeless households and extremely low-income households on the brink of homelessness.

Our members work closely with neighbors experiencing homelessness and see how easily folks can become homeless, and how hard it is for folks to get out of shelter and find housing. We know that homelessness is a housing problem: there aren’t enough available, affordable units for extremely low-income folks. According to the 2023 Housing and Vacancy Survey, less than 1% of units renting for less than \$1,100 a month were available.

But the affordable housing our city is creating isn’t meeting that need. Despite record levels of “affordable” housing production in recent years, most of the “affordable” housing created by the City excludes households who are homeless and extremely low-income. In 2024, the largest share of new “affordable” units funded by the City were for households earning six figures. From 2014 to 2024, on average, only 2,000 units a year were financed for extremely low-income and homeless households—four times fewer than higher-income households.

The homelessness crisis will continue to grow unless the City corrects the misalignment between the greatest need for affordable housing and the priorities for affordable housing production. I urge the administration and this Council to right this wrong and give homeless and extremely low-income New Yorkers more opportunities to get permanent affordable housing. Thank you.



**Testimony for the New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings
Preliminary Budget Hearing
March 24th, 2026**

Thank you to Chair Sanchez and the members of the Committee on Housing and Buildings for the opportunity to submit testimony on the Fiscal Year 2027 budget. I'm Bonnie Mohan and I am the co-founder and executive director of The Health & Housing Consortium.

The Consortium is a collaborative network of health care, housing, homeless and social service organizations, and government partners with the shared goal of improving health equity and housing stability in New York City.

We work hand in hand with frontline workers, executive leadership, government stakeholders, and people with lived experience. The deep need for more affordable and supportive housing across the five boroughs punctuates all of our work.

Almost 150,000 people sleep in the city's shelters every night — over 48,000 of them are children. And according to the city's Homeless Outreach Population Estimate, at least 4,000 New Yorkers sleep on the street, although we know that number is much higher.

Another 200,000 sleep doubled up in other people's homes, often in dangerous and unsuitable living conditions, but unable to receive financial assistance because the City doesn't consider them homeless.

We live in one of the most expensive cities in the world and most of us are one crisis, one missed paycheck, one medical expense, away from disaster. Most homeless families living in shelter cite the lack of affordable housing following a crisis as their reason for entering shelter.

The Consortium plays a key role in training the human services workforce to address these challenges. Every year, we train over 4,000 frontline and direct service workers on the issues that most impact their clients and patients.

We train on topics at the intersection of health and housing, but the most requested trainings—by far—pertain to accessing and navigating NYC's housing systems.

In 2025, over 1000 frontline workers participated in training on addressing rental arrears and accessing affordable housing. Another 1000 attended training on the CityFHEPS and FHEPS housing vouchers. We know that these vouchers are flawed – many landlords illegally refuse to accept them, with little to no repercussions, resulting in families spending far too much time living in shelter. We can arm the workforce with all the knowledge in the world, but the impact of that knowledge is stunted if there just isn't enough affordable housing to begin with.

The City must commit to creating 12,000 units of truly affordable housing per year for the next five years—for a total of 60,000 units available only to homeless and extremely low-income households on the brink of homelessness.

By making this commitment, New York will take an essential step towards ensuring that everyone in our city has a safe, affordable place to call home.



**New York City Council Preliminary Budget Hearing
Housing and Buildings Committee
March 24, 2026**

Testimony on behalf of The Community Preservation Corporation

Thank you, Chair Sanchez, members of the Housing and Buildings Committee, and other distinguished members of the New York City Council for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Emily Klein, and I am the Assistant Vice President and Deputy Director for Public Affairs at the Community Preservation Corporation (CPC), a nonprofit affordable housing and community revitalization company that was formed in the early 1970s to help New York City and State restore and rebuild communities which were devastated by deterioration and abandonment.

Today, CPC uses its unique expertise in housing finance and public policy to expand access to quality housing, drive down the costs of affordable housing production, advance diversity and equity within the affordable housing development industry, and address the effects of climate change in our communities through the financing of sustainable housing. Since our founding, CPC has invested over \$16 billion to finance the creation and preservation of more than 276,000 units of affordable and workforce housing through our lending and investing platforms. CPC serves as a permanent lending partner to the New York City Retirement Systems and the New York State Common Retirement Fund, and we are also the servicer of a portion of the rent stabilized multifamily loan portfolio formerly held by Signature Bank, which includes just under 35,000 units of housing across New York City, where we are working diligently to preserve the physical quality and financial stability of that critical portion of the housing stock.



CPC's broader partnership with New York City reflects a shared commitment to accelerating the production of new and the preservation of existing affordable residential housing.

We applaud Mayor Mamdani's commitment to enacting a balanced budget for FY2027 that advances the bold action needed to deliver the safe and affordable city New Yorkers deserve.

We are encouraged to see the Mayor's FY2027 Preliminary Budget proposal include significant support for numerous housing programs, including:

Expanded support for NYCHA rehabilitation: We applaud the \$670 million allocated for NYCHA Section 8 Conversions under the Permanent Affordability Commitment Together (PACT) program next year, bringing the total FY2027 budget for PACT conversions to \$1 billion. PACT remains one of the City's most important tools for channeling critical capital into NYCHA developments while safeguarding long-standing tenant rights and protections, and CPC has seen firsthand the transformative impact of the model. Through the PACT Renaissance Collaborative, CPC participated in the comprehensive rehabilitation of thirty-eight distressed NYCHA buildings in Upper Manhattan. This effort delivered extensive upgrades to 1,718 apartments and common areas, improving living conditions for around 3,000 residents. Especially in a moment when we see federal support for public housing diminishing at an alarming rate, we are encouraged to see the Mamdani administration's continued support of PACT/RAD and NYCHA.

Prudent expansion of CityFHEPS: The Mayor's proposed budget also allocates significant new resources for CityFHEPS: \$2.3 billion in the coming year and rising to \$2.7–\$3 billion in subsequent years – a meaningful commitment to supporting New Yorkers at risk of



homelessness. Especially as federal investment in the Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers program is eroded, local support for housing vouchers is crucial.

Bolstered Capacity at HPD: While we applaud these investments, the Mayor’s proposed budget lowers HPD’s expense budget from \$2 billion to \$1.5 billion. As the City heralds in a new chapter with a renewed focus on housing affordability, the work of HPD remains critically important and we encourage the administration to support the HPD’s efforts with sufficient capital and staffing.

As the City finalizes its budgetary priorities for the next year, we urge prioritizing the increasingly tenuous financial and physical conditions of much of the city’s rent-stabilized housing stock. There are roughly one million rent stabilized apartments¹ in New York City, accounting for 28% of the city’s total housing stock and 44% of all rental units². Rent stabilization has helped keep the overall median rent well below typical market-rate levels, providing affordable homes for over 2 million New Yorker renters. But, while rents may be stabilized, the costs of maintaining and operating these buildings are not. Utility bills, insurance, and costs of labor and materials for repairs keep rising. Between 2020 and 2024, CPC saw per-unit operating expenses rise 22% across our rent-stabilized NYC portfolio; insurance and administrative costs each climbed more than 50% during that period. Other mission-based lenders have reported³ similar distress trends, finding that total operating expenses for affordable housing have increased 40% since 2017, including a 110% rise in insurance costs. Despite these

¹ <https://citylimits.org/does-that-building-have-stabilized-apartments-itll-soon-be-easier-to-know/>

² <https://www.nytimes.com/article/rent-stabilized-apartments-nyc.html#:~:text=There%20are%20roughly%201%2C006%2C000%20rent%2Dstabilized%20apartments%20in,that%20rent%20at%20below%20the%20market%20rate>

³ <https://www.enterprisecommunity.org/sites/default/files/2025-10/Distress-in-NY-Affordable-Housing-Stock.pdf>



cost increases, pathways to modest revenue growth remain tightly constrained by regulatory agreements subject to approved rent increases determined annually by the Rent Guidelines Board. This creates a fundamental mismatch for affordable properties: when expenses grow faster than revenues, owners lack viable pathways to close that gap. As shown by the only expense line to experience flat or negative growth in the past three years, owners in this position may choose to defer routine repairs and maintenance but these decisions meant to mitigate financial distress, can quickly lead to physical distress and decreasing housing quality.

We are seeing this trend play out across the former Signature Bank portfolio that CPC is servicing. Comprised of just under 35,000 units – 80% of which are rent stabilized – across roughly 1,100 buildings spread all over New York City, the CSP portfolio represents a cross-section of New York City’s rent stabilized stock. In just over two years of servicing and asset managing this portfolio, we have found that about 70% of loans exhibit at least one indicator of financial distress, and 33% of loans support buildings with one or more indicators of physical distress. Often, the two go together. While this portfolio is somewhat unique given the lending practices of Signature Bank before its collapse, we see the realities of this portfolio as a harbinger of what could come for other rent stabilized buildings. When cash flow is constrained to the point of financial infeasibility, building conditions suffer and housing quality degrades.

The challenges facing New York City's affordable housing stock require urgent responses and we are supportive of the New York Housing Conference-led C.R.I.S.I.S agenda, which proposes targeted measures to address operating deficits in affordable housing. From CPC’s perspective, we’d like to amplify the call for action on two distinct but equally urgent fronts. The first is reducing the operating costs for rent stabilized buildings by addressing the cost drivers



that are eroding the financial viability of regulated affordable housing. The second is modernizing existing systems and addressing systemic inefficiencies within existing city processes. Together, these two tracks form a comprehensive approach to preserving and expanding the city's affordable housing stock.

Reduce Building Operating Expenses

- **J-51:** One critical step in stabilizing and strengthening the city's existing housing stock is the reform and reauthorization of the J-51 tax incentive, as proposed in Governor Hochul's FY27 budget. For decades, J-51 has helped owners of rent-stabilized and deeply affordable housing undertake necessary capital improvements that would otherwise be financially infeasible. While the impact of recent versions of the program was limited by outdated cost schedules, a modernized J-51 can once again become a powerful tool for preserving the city's regulated housing stock. We encourage the Mayor and Council to work hand in hand with Albany to ensure that this critical tool is expeditiously reauthorized and deployed for buildings that need it today.
- **Insurance:** across CPC's portfolio, we have seen per unit insurance premiums increase 50% over pre-pandemic levels – and we know that this number is even higher for some supportive and deeply affordable housing providers. We encourage continued collaboration on innovative solutions to slow and ultimately stop runaway insurance costs. The recent successes of new affordable housing insurance captives demonstrate the market appetite and economic feasibility of alternative insurance approaches, and we look forward to supporting the City as they work towards solutions for runaway insurance costs.



- **Property taxes:** In a landscape of rising expenses, taxes are one of the few major cost drivers where government intervention can meaningfully influence long-term building stability. While we applaud the Mayor’s commitment to a balanced budget with sufficient revenue to support innovative new programs, we strongly urge that a balanced budget not come at the expense of placing further financial burdens on distressed buildings. The Mayor’s proposal to increase property taxes by 9.5% would be devastating for rent stabilized properties that are already operating on thin margins, especially if paired with a proposed rent freeze. We urge the Mamdani administration to continue negotiating with its partners in Albany to find other avenues for raising revenue and instead explore targeted property tax relief for stabilized buildings with the most severe levels of financial and physical distress. A long-term, 100% property tax exemption for distressed stabilized buildings could effectively slow financial decline and free up vital capital to support much needed building improvements. We welcome all opportunities to use CPC’s data to inform such interventions.
- **Utilities:** Key to a financially healthy building is the ability to accurately predict expenses, which has become increasingly difficult to do as water, sewer, and utility prices continue to rise erratically. We encourage the City to explore partnerships with public agencies and private service providers to establish reasonable and reliable cost increase schedules that allow buildings to budget accordingly. When needed, government should step in to offer relief for the most severely distressed buildings – no building, nor their tenants, should face the threat of utility shutoffs due to constrained operating expenses.



Modernizing Systems and Addressing Inefficiencies

Beyond cost reduction, meaningful reform of existing government systems and programs is essential to expanding access to affordable housing.

- **Flexibility in Development Resources and Processes:** Projects that receive City subsidy increasingly face disruptions caused by shifts in construction costs, operating expenses, and interest rates, factors that are largely external and difficult to anticipate. This has required a significant share of HPD's financial and staff resources to be devoted to restructuring projects mid-development. To support these challenging projects, sufficient financial and staff resources must be dedicated to project restructuring, and flexibility should be built into the capital subsidy process from the start. Financial resources should be as flexible as possible, with minimal OMB review requirements and, ideally, exemptions from capital eligibility constraints. Furthermore, given the nature of these project challenges, the power to negotiate, set, and reevaluate project term sheets should remain squarely within HPD. Inserting the Council into the term sheet process would only further delay project timelines and impose additional cost constraints on owners, developers, and ultimately City capital programs. Flexible development processes and resources are crucial if we hope to address the housing crisis at the scale it demands.
- **Streamline Housing Voucher Administration:** A stable voucher program depends on predictability and reliability for both tenants and building owners, however the City's administration of voucher programs is riddled with delays and inefficiencies. These burdens make up a system of brutal bureaucracy that keeps households from getting the vouchers they need and discourages owners from eagerly accepting voucher paying



tenants. This new administration should build, or in some cases rebuild, as simple, straightforward, and nimble a system of voucher administration as possible that prioritizes rapid deployment of funding to all who qualify and sets clear, reasonable eligibility standards with simple documentation requirements so that a renter in need can apply and receive rental assistance in quick succession. Simple solutions, like fixing the voucher holder's share for a one-year lease at 30% of income at the time of lease signing, can eliminate unnecessary administrative burden without compromising program integrity. Also, whenever possible, vouchers should be project-based and targeted toward new mixed-income developments supported by local and statewide construction, giving developers greater financial certainty and accelerating the production of affordable units.

- **Speeding Up Housing Connect:** Administrative bottlenecks and excessive oversight within HPD's Housing Connect Lottery system are significantly delaying the placement of New Yorkers into newly constructed affordable homes. A recent NYHC case study found that leasing 180 newly built affordable apartments in the Bronx took 27 months, even though the building had received a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy and was ready for occupancy. Last year, HPD and HDC issued a 1-year pilot waiver to the Housing Connect Marketing Handbook Section 4-4(A) for re-rentals, resales, and mini-lotteries, removing requirements for certain developments to use NYC Housing Connect for re-rental and resales, and we encourage HPD/HDC to make this waiver permanent, in addition to continuing to look for opportunities to streamline the Housing Connect marketing process. We are encouraged by Mayor Mamdani's Streamlining Procedures to Expedite Equitable Development Task Force ("SPEED Task Force") as a positive step



toward modernizing and streamlining these processes and we urge the Mayor and Council to work together to take substantive action to eliminate delays and improve outcomes for both applicants and operators.

While no one tool can holistically fix the financial and physical distress in rent stabilized housing, a suite of tools enabled by strong budgetary choices and bold legislative action can provide meaningful relief and prevent broader collapse. The Mamdani administration and the City Council have an opportunity to tackle our housing crisis head on and demonstrate the power of government to ensure quality housing to tenants, support responsible building ownership, and stabilize communities – we urge them to take it.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Community Preservation Corporation, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.



East New York Community Land Trust
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East New York Community Land Trust

Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings — Preliminary Budget Hearing

March 24, 2026

The East New York Community Land Trust, founded in 2020 by residents of East New York and Brownsville, works to prevent displacement, real estate speculation, and support community ownership in the neighborhoods of East New York and Brownsville. We do this through community and tenant organizing, planning, and providing permanently affordable housing and commercial space on community-owned and democratically-governed land.

In five years and on a shoestring budget, the East New York Community Land Trust (ENYCLT) has grown into a thriving democratic, dues-paying membership organization with a track record of landmark victories. In February 2024, we completed **the first-ever private real estate acquisition by a CLT in New York City history**: the purchase of a 20-unit rent-stabilized building at 248 Arlington Avenue where one of our members lives and had been organizing with her neighbors for repairs and against harassment for years, to no avail. Through tenant organizing and an innovative financing model — partnering with high-net-worth donors to move at market speed while longer-term public funding is secured — we created a precedent demonstrating that low-income Black and Brown New Yorkers can build democratically governed, permanently affordable housing solutions on our own timelines.

Our other major member-led victories include founding the citywide **Abolish the Tax Lien Sale Coalition** and recruiting 10 other advocacy organizations and CLTs to join it. The Coalition successfully halted the city's tax lien sale from 2022–2024, and supported the introduction and passage of legislation that will abolish the lien sale and create a publicly accountable land bank. Through our **Justice for the Jewel Streets** coalition, we organized residents of a disinvested, chronically flood-prone, infrastructure-neglected community and secured a \$150 million city commitment for sewer and stormwater upgrades — along with the city's first-ever pre-disaster buyout program — and are now leading a planning initiative for a 17-acre city-owned vacant lot in the area.

We are currently in contract to purchase a commercial building at 161 Jamaica Avenue, a 9,500 square foot historic building, which will become the East Brooklyn Liberation Center. Our acquisition will address the pressing need for affordable commercial space in our neighborhoods. The Center will be a community stronghold that will house ENYCLT's rapidly expanding membership and staff, provide a safe, non-policed space for tenant and member meetings, trainings, and ICE defense support, offer deeply affordable, long-term space for cultural organizations like Preserving East New York and the East Brooklyn Archives, and **create deeply affordable workshop and office space for worker cooperatives and solidarity economy businesses**. There is a tremendous need for affordable commercial space like the East Brooklyn Liberation Center in East New York and Brownsville.

The ENYCLT, like other CLTs around the City, are evidence of the difference that CLTs can make in communities and the lives of residents. We provide an avenue for residents to become actively involved in the future of their communities: each of our victories was launched and directed by our members to gain democratic community control of land.

City support has been integral to our growth and the growth of the CLT movement in New York City, but it is increasingly insufficient. The City can and must do more to support CLTs in their work to prevent displacement, counter real estate speculation, and support community-led efforts for community ownership and control. We are asking the City Council to make important investments to support our work and that of CLTs citywide.

Fund the citywide Community Land Trust Initiative at \$3 million in FY2027, which will support the growth of CLTs in NYC through operational support and technical assistance.

- **CLTs are central to addressing the City's persistent housing affordability crisis,** not only by providing permanently affordable housing on community-owned and -governed land, but by working with tenants and community members to identify and counter real estate practices that drive up housing costs, promote displacement and housing insecurity, and lead to deteriorating housing conditions.
- **CLTs provide a pathway for inclusive community and economic development.** ENYCLT, like other CLTs in the City, builds deep relationships with residents and organizations in our communities to identify and address opportunities for sustainable and equitable development. Led by our members, we develop viable solutions to the problems we face because we know the problems we face best.
- **CLTs are efficient stewards of public investment.** We operate on generational timelines and preserve public investment for the long haul. Our commitment to permanent affordability ensures that the City will not have to figure out how to replace affordable housing when it is lost to an expiring regulatory agreement.

Create and fund a \$50 million Community Land Trust Acquisition Fund in the 2027 budget that will allow CLTs to acquire and develop permanently affordable housing and commercial space.

- **CLTs should have access to funding that will allow them to remove property from the speculative real estate market, including residential and commercial property.** Because CLTs know their communities best, they should be able to access resources to address the issues that residents identify as the most pressing. CLTs must have flexible funding that will allow them to realize their missions and hold the values that their communities have set for them.
- **Any program must include pre-qualification and pre-approval components.** We and other CLTs in the City focus on taking property out of the speculative market to insulate businesses, nonprofits, and residents from soaring prices and property market volatility. In doing so, we compete against private buyers who have capital on hand for acquisition. Having pre-approval would also increase the likelihood that sellers would engage and negotiate with nonprofits since a line for funding has already been

established. A pre-approval process, conducted through an annual Request for Proposals, would allow CLTs to define the general project scope and, if approved, have a set amount of time (12-18 months) to identify a property that meets the project budget and scope. CLTs would then submit a detailed project package that would be approved or denied by the program administrators, ideally within 30 days. Part of an approved project budget should be made available for technical assistance and a down payment. A pre-approval component is a feature of a similar housing acquisition program administered by the City of Toronto and has allowed the preservation of more than 1,000 affordable housing units by CLTs and Indigenous-led housing organizations — which could be adapted in New York City.

- **No or low-cost financing.** Ideally, the program would operate as a grant program to promote deeply affordable rents for residents and commercial spaces. If it is determined that a grant program is not feasible, the cost of capital should be below 3% to support affordability.
- **Financing should be forgivable.** If not a grant program, the loans (or some portion of them) should be forgivable. To ensure that affordability is maintained over the long-term, loans could be forgiven at a rate of 1% per year for 99-years, the typical length of a CLT ground lease.

Examine options other than a contractual line for CLT Initiative Funding, to limit delays in timely payment to CLTs.

- **It takes the City an excessively long time to pay contractors under the CLT Initiative.** Other programs, such as HPD's Partners in Preservation, have far more responsive payment timelines. To ensure that CLTs are not waiting years for their funding, we urge the Council to examine other ways to structure and disburse CLT Initiative funding that will reach groups in a more timely manner.

The CLT movement in New York City is strong and growing. ENYCLT and other CLTs in the City are uniquely positioned to help address the housing affordability crisis, the lack of affordable community and commercial space in working-class BIPOC communities, and other challenges facing New Yorkers that require locally-identified solutions. The City Council must support this work by increasing its commitment to communities served by CLTs with increased operational and acquisition funding.



**Testimony of Enterprise Community Partners
The New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings
Preliminary Budget Hearing for Fiscal Year 2027**

March 24, 2026

My name is Jonathan Eber, and I am a Program Manager at Enterprise Community Partners. Enterprise is a national nonprofit that exists to make a good home possible for the millions of families without one. We support community development organizations on the ground, aggregate and invest capital for impact, advance housing policy at every level of government, and build and manage communities ourselves. Since our New York office opened in 1987, we have committed more than \$4.7 billion in equity, loans and grants to affordable housing and community to create or preserve over 69,800 affordable homes across New York City. On behalf of Enterprise, I would like to thank Chair Sanchez and the members of this Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony.

This year, New Yorkers made it resoundingly clear that affordability is on everyone's minds, particularly when it comes to housing. Amidst our historic housing and homelessness crises, we need greater investment at every level of government. This year's preliminary budget largely maintains the status quo on housing. Beyond increased funding to maintain existing CityFHEPS vouchers, and more funding for PACT conversions, there is little change to the housing budget. Amidst an uncertain federal landscape, we urge the City to be bolder and do more to solve our housing crisis this year.

Expediting Lease Ups

To solve our housing and homelessness crises, we should work to move New Yorkers into permanent, affordable housing as quickly as possible. Yet the process of leasing up affordable housing is beset with delays and red tape. Our research demonstrates that it takes a median of 439 days to lease up an affordable building compared to a median of 235 days nationally. Every day that it takes to lease up a building is another day a family spends in shelter. This is unconscionable. These delays also impact mission-driven owners, who struggle to provide services amid escalating costs and decreasing revenue.

While we are encouraged by recent steps that the Department of Housing Preservation & Development (HPD) and The Department of Social Services (DSS) have taken to address these delays, more must be done. Over the last year, we worked with advocates, service providers and developers to develop a set of recommendations to address these delays, focusing on

HousingConnect, homeless placements, and CityFHEPS. As the City looks to overhaul these processes, we wish to raise the following recommendations to make these processes work better for all New Yorkers.

- **Frontload and Streamline Bureaucratic Approvals to Avoid Delays:** Before the lottery for a particular project even launches, a significant source of delay is the marketing plan approval process. Currently, this process begins when a building with affordable units is 70% built, intending to time the lottery with building completion. However, this timeframe is not realistic, as the process is too intensive and has too many steps. The City should significantly streamline its approval processes by adopting a universal marketing plan template that is completed within the Housing Connect system, finalized between HPD and the development team and approved at closing. An HPD marketing team member should be included in that process rather than entering the process later during construction. The plan can be tweaked later during construction, but it should be agreed at closing.
- **Make Commonsense Rule Changes for Re-Rentals Permanent:** The previous process of putting all re-rental opportunities through a centralized system where owners sift through batches of referrals who did not explicitly apply to the project was enormously inefficient. As a result, the City announced a waiver process which expires this April. This waiver process, which allows owners to fill units with qualifying tenants provided they publicly post the re-rental opportunities on Housing Connect and a public listing site, is significantly faster, should not end but rather be made permanent.
- **Shift Agency Focus Towards Broad Oversight:** There are too many steps in the marketing and lottery processes that require agency levels of review and approval. The appropriate role of government agencies is identifying infractions and utilizing enforcement actions – not step-by-step review and approvals. The city can delegate responsibilities of adherence with the marketing plan to prequalified marketing agents, saving agency focus for enforcement of Fair Housing violations, and ensure that applicants have a pathway to resolve concerns.

Expanding CityFHEPS

As co-conveners of the Family Homelessness Coalition (FHC), we are committed to tackling the homelessness crisis and working to ensure that families can safely exit shelter and remain stably housed. The City Fighting Homelessness and Eviction Prevention Supplement (CityFHEPS) is New York City's best tool to do that. It is the second largest voucher program in the country, and responsible for about 70% of exits from the City's homeless shelters. We continue to emphasize the urgent need to implement the CityFHEPS expansion that was passed into law in 2023 and has since been held up in legal limbo. The investment in CityFHEPS addresses the cyclical nature of

homelessness. Without stable housing, families repeatedly return to shelter. A [recent Win report](#) finds that shelter costs 35% more and moving families into permanent housing with CityFHEPS could save the City \$635 million in shelter costs over 5 years. The choice is not only a financial one, but a moral one. We cannot let New Yorkers and their families remain homeless and wait any longer for the stability that these vouchers provide.

Addressing Housing Discrimination

To ensure the success of CityFHEPS and other voucher holders, New York City must also address source of income discrimination. The administration's preliminary budget threatens to cut funding for the City Commission on Human Rights (CCHR), the agency responsible for enforcing fair housing protections, by 8%. This would halt the slow rebuilding of the agency, enforcing our local source of income laws at this critical moment when our local source of income law is more important than ever.

We call on the Council and Mayor to reverse course, abandon the proposed budget cut and instead increase the FY26 budget for the Commission by \$10 million so that it is funded at \$25 million in FY27. Increasing funding would allow the agency to expand its successful early intervention unit to resolve cases quickly so that New Yorkers with vouchers can move into housing faster and utilize our precious voucher resources and would also allow CCHR to adequately fund newly enacted protections for New Yorkers impacted by the criminal legal system.

Prioritizing Distress in Affordable Housing

In October, Enterprise [released a report](#) highlighting concerning signs of distress in New York's affordable housing stock. We found that over the past several years, financial strain in affordable housing properties has risen significantly, leading to 57% of projects running operational deficits – taking in less income than they are expending. This data is representative of the challenges across the affordable housing portfolio and if left unaddressed, threaten our affordable housing stock as a whole. The City must tackle the preservation of existing units with the same urgency as the need to add new housing units.

We as a member of the affordable housing preservation coalition call on the City Council and the Mamdani administration to address operating deficits for affordable housing properties. We propose a set of solutions – focused on supporting buildings at risk of default, increasing revenue for affordable housing buildings, and decreasing their expense to address the C.R.I.S.I.S. agenda:

C.R.I.S.I.S. Agenda

- Create a \$1 billion loan workout & reserve replenishment fund for affordable housing buildings under regulatory agreement with the city at risk of default.

- **Raise revenue by allowing vacancies to comply with current area median income (AMI) rent limits in 100% income-restricted affordable housing buildings under regulatory agreement with HPD or the New York State Homes and Community Renewal (HCR).**
- **Increase capacity for loan restructuring on a portfolio basis for preservation finance and asset management at HPD to meet growing preservation needs.**
- **Staff DSS adequately to ensure New Yorkers access and retain affordable housing by proactively preventing nonpayment evictions; supporting timely homeless set-aside referrals; and efficiently processing of CityFHEPS.**
- **Invest in a municipally backed affordable housing insurance program to lower premiums for HPD-financed buildings.**
- **Save money on water bills in affordable housing by expanding the Multifamily Water Assistance Program to cover all affordable housing by budgeting \$100 million and increasing the per unit discount to \$500 per unit.**

Thank you again for the chance to submit testimony.



TESTIMONY

Submitted to the

New York City Council Committee on General Welfare

on the subject of The Preliminary Budget for FY27

March 24, 2026

Chair Sanchez and Members of the Committee on Housing and Buildings, we are the [Family Homelessness Coalition](#) (FHC) — a membership body with expertise covering all facets of New York City’s (NYC) systems of care and advancement for New York families who experience housing instability and families who lose their housing. From shelter to permanent affordable housing to community-based services to child advocacy to workforce to education, the FHC members work closely with and include the families who navigate the complex safety net systems of New York City. We promote child and family well-being when shelter is unavoidable and advocate for the creation of additional permanent housing resources for homeless children and their families.

We write to you today to express our concerns about the housing resources in the Preliminary Budget for FY27 that would support housing security and help families move out of shelter by securing housing. The FHC finds it unacceptable that a proposed budget of \$124 billion for FY27 will leave families experiencing homelessness and other families at risk of homelessness with no substantial change from FY26. The Council needs to ensure that the Mamdani administration is duly considering homeless and extremely low-income families in his affordability agenda. The City cannot continue to allow more than 150,000¹ children to lose their housing during the course of a year.

The FHC believes that the City must intervene in the crisis of family homelessness by investing strategically in housing that is affordable to the lowest income families. The current City system in which families struggle to access housing security resources, struggle to maintain quality of life after losing housing, and struggle to access new housing once they are in shelter is a system that is not built for the magnitude of the city’s crisis and will not end family homelessness.

One of the most impactful ways the City can help families is by investing in the housing resources that have proven effective at shifting the trajectory of family homelessness. The FHC urges the City to increase investment in these housing solutions to respond proportionately to the crisis of family homelessness by:

- Increase and dedicate capital funding specifically to create units affordable to extremely low-income households that can serve families experiencing homelessness;

¹ Advocates for Children of New York. (2025, October 20). *Student Homelessness in New York City, 2024–25*. https://advocatesforchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/student_homelessness_2024-25.pdf



- Ensuring implementation of the Housing Access Voucher Program focuses on moving families out of shelter and into housing;
- Increase and dedicate capital funding for homeless set-aside units and reducing barriers to accessing homeless set-aside units so that families experiencing homelessness have a direct pipeline of housing units and the amount of time a family needs to spend in shelter is minimal.

The FHC has already testified to the Committee on General Welfare that it believes that the CityFHEPS program expansion should be fully funded FY27 as a proven, impactful resource to enable families to exit shelter. The FHC also urged the Committee on General Welfare to sufficiently fund Homebase in order for it to resume its core functions of preventing imminent evictions, administering emergency rental assistance efficiently, and supporting extremely low-income families in obtaining the public benefits to which they are entitled.

The Family Homelessness Coalition urges the Housing and Buildings Committee to take a holistic view on the crisis of families without housing in New York City right now. We urge you to coordinate with your counterpart committees of General Welfare, Public Housing, Education, and Finance, as well as with other key decision-makers. It is you who will collectively determine whether families in New York City continue to struggle with losing their housing and, if lost, whether they can secure housing once again in FY27. We urge you to use your funding and policy powers to their highest potential for families experiencing housing insecurity.

We thank the Committee for its attention to and consideration of these comments.

The Family Homelessness Coalition ²

² Steering Committee Members: *Advocates For Children, Barrier Free Living, Camba, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, Coalition for the Homeless, CSH, Enterprise Community Partners, Family Action Board, Terra Linda Housing Services, Homes for the Homeless, Henry Street Settlement, Homeless Services United, Homes for the Homeless, New Destiny Housing, Riseboro, Safe Horizon, Sanctuary For Families, Settlement Housing Fund, Volunteers of America-Greater New York, Win*

HEAT PUMPS FOR ALL

Expanded Testimony Submitted by Richard Leigh, PhD, PE, LEED AP

On behalf of Food and Water Watch to the

New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings

On 24 March 2026

OUR PROPOSAL: That New York City provide \$10,000 incentives to 1000 selected 1-2 family homeowners for acquisition of a whole-building heat pump system when their existing oil or gas-fired boiler or furnace fails or is failing. As presented, the total budget would be \$10 million plus administrative costs.

WHY THIS COMMITTEE? Our proposal involves a budgetary requisition for money, and if implemented, will initiate significant reductions in the air quality impact of selected small buildings while aiding the city in meeting its greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction goals. There is currently no boiler inspection requirement for the thousands of one and two family residences in New York City.

PROGRAM JUSTIFICATION AND CONCERNS:

- * Established science tells us that [climate change is real](#) and a viable human future will require a 100% reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050. (Links such as the preceding provide technical backup material.)
- * Alternative solutions such as [geoengineering](#) can provide only marginal reductions in risk, with troublesome environmental impacts and legal ambiguities.
- * **Elimination of GHG emissions is the only viable way to a livable future ([IPCC, p. 28](#)).**
 - * For New York City, this requires the replacement of all fuel-based systems, specifically heat and hot water, with electric devices. (GHGs associated with electricity generation will decrease toward zero as New York State fulfills its [obligations](#).)
 - * NYC now requires large buildings to reduce emissions to near zero by 2050 ([Local Law 97](#)) and new construction to be all-electric ([Local Law 154](#)). This policy is consistent with science, will be challenged by real estate interests, and must be maintained.
 - * The emission reductions associated with electrification must be extended to the nearly one million smaller buildings spread across the five boroughs, especially one and two-family dwellings whose owners are financially challenged. This proposal will demonstrate the technical practicality of efficient electric heating.
 - * For space heating, the clear choice is heat pumps, which, powered by electricity, suck heat from outdoor air (even in winter) and deliver it to the interior space. They provide three to four times as much heat per unit of electric energy as does old fashioned resistance heating. They also provide efficient electric cooling in the summer.
 - * A New York City “Heat Pumps for All” program, providing a \$10,000 incentive to 1000 owners of one and two-family buildings, at a cost of \$10 million, is a viable initial

solution to this challenge. This program would also demonstrate the advantages of heat pumps to the public while providing a valuable training and testing ground for the industry.

- * For several reasons, New York City must establish this program as rapidly as possible:
 - * Thousands of smaller buildings in NYC have heating boilers or furnaces that are at or near the end of useful life. If they are replaced by similar, new fuel-fired appliances (which is the easiest and least expensive option), the system will continue to pollute, and will become worthless stranded assets over the next ten to twenty years as gas becomes increasingly expensive and unavailable.
 - * The city must make replacement of these systems by heat pumps practical for cash-strapped homeowners who are already financially burdened. \$10,000 will not pay for a complete heat pump system, but will make one affordable for many homeowners.
 - * To ensure leak-free and reliable systems, heat pumps require a well-trained, unionized work force. Heat Pumps for All must incorporate training and recruitment components and links to energy efficiency loans.
 - * [Available research](#) has shown that in many areas the New York City electric distribution system is currently adequate for heat pump installations in at least 30% of buildings, and that winter peak demand can be held down by straightforward energy efficiency improvements. As long as reasonable criteria for building characteristics are developed and followed, demand for this program will greatly exceed supply.

We urge the Mayor and Council to set up a \$10 million initial allocation in the upcoming city budget to begin such a program and upgrade about 1,000 homes in 2027.

Heat Pumps for All is a project of #GasFreeNYC, a coalition of organizations including Food & Water Watch, AIA-NY, New York Communities for Change (NYCC), New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), MCA New York, WE ACT for Environmental Justice, and other local environmental organizations.

Richard Leigh is a consulting physicist and engineer. Active in the field of energy efficient engineering and systems studies for over thirty years, he holds a PhD in Physics and is a Professional Engineer and a LEED AP. Formerly he was a Visiting Professor of Physics at Pratt Institute, teaching courses in climate change science and mitigation. He also served for eight years as Director of Research at Urban Green Council, where his work included building energy use data, low emission futures, building code development, and worker education. He can be reached at rwleigh@earthlink.net.



HOMELESS SERVICES UNITED
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Homeless Services United’s Testimony for the New York City Council Housing & Buildings Committee Hearing
March 24, 2026

My name is Victoria Leahy, and I am the Director of Policy and Planning at Homeless Services United (HSU). HSU is a coalition representing over 55 mission-driven, homeless service providers in New York City. HSU advocates for the expansion of affordable housing and prevention services and immediate access to safe, decent emergency and transitional housing and outreach and drop-in services for homeless New Yorkers. Homeless Services United promotes effective solutions to end the crisis of homelessness in New York City. We thank the committee for your attention to New York City’s housing infrastructure and affordable housing stock.

New York City confronts an unprecedented homelessness crisis – at its height, sheltering 125,000 people. That is enough to fill Madison Square Garden five times over. This year’s City budget can make a sizeable difference in lessening the number of New Yorkers experiencing homelessness by making targeted investments in our system.

The City must commit to creating 12,000 units of truly affordable housing per year for the next five years—for a total of 60,000 units available only to homeless and extremely low-income households on the brink of homelessness.

As reported by the National Low Income Housing Coalition, there are only 35 units of affordable housing per 100 extremely low-income renter households. New York City must prioritize investing capital for deeply affordable housing— specifically for those who are currently homeless and extremely low-income households at imminent risk of homelessness. Investing in deeply affordable housing is the long-term solution to decreasing New York City’s shelter census and ending homelessness.

We must ensure that the FY27 budget includes sufficient funding to restore and expand headcounts at DHS, DSS, and HPD.

Our social services and housing government agencies are charged to meet the needs of New Yorkers – yet these agencies are riddled with staff vacancies. For example, 23% of the 2,115 budgeted positions at DHS are currently vacant, and there are 1,307 vacancies at HRA. These vacancies cause systems to slow down by the lack of workers approving and processing benefits, meaning even when organizations are efficiently completing housing applications, client access to benefits from government is still delayed.

Just increasing staff is not enough – we need to make sure social service agency staff are trained to best address the needs of New Yorkers. Too often, clients report being given information that is inaccurate or told that they cannot apply for programs at a center when they fully have the right to. These positions must be both staffed and trained at a level that makes service delivery more accessible – not add to the barriers that New Yorkers face when in need of help.

This year’s budget must increase investments in vital prevention programs and make accessing benefits easier for New Yorkers.

New York City’s Homebase program is already at capacity. As a result, wait times have increased for critical Homebase services like help with eviction prevention, emergency rental assistance, and obtaining benefits. Some HSU Homebase providers report exceeding their deliverables by 113% with months still left in the contract year – yet they receive no increased funding from HRA. Homebase providers will not be able to assist 5,500 households based on their current capacity. To ease this burden, we need to increase the budget for Homebase by \$38.3 million to a total of \$100 million to right size Homebase contracts, so Homebase service providers can meet the increasing needs of the city.

We support the New York Housing Conference’s C.R.I.S.I.S. agenda.

The agenda details affordable housing preservation priorities for the City Council and the Mamdani Administration to address operating deficits in affordable housing:

- Create a \$1 billion loan workout & reserve replenishment fund for affordable housing buildings under regulatory agreement with NYC HPD at risk of default.
- Raise revenue by allowing vacancies to comply with current AMI rent limits in 100% income-restricted affordable housing buildings under regulatory agreement with NYC HPD or NYS HCR.
- Increase capacity for loan restructuring on a portfolio basis for preservation finance and asset management at NYC HPD to meet growing preservation needs.
- Staff NYC DSS adequately to ensure New Yorkers can access and retain affordable housing by proactively preventing nonpayment evictions; supporting timely homeless set-aside referrals; and efficiently processing of CityFHEPs.
- Invest in a municipally backed affordable housing insurance program to lower premiums for HPD-financed buildings.
- Save money on water bills in affordable housing by expanding the Multi-family Water Assistance Program to cover all affordable housing by budgeting \$100 million and increasing the per unit discount to \$500 per unit.

We support an increased investment in Supportive Housing programming, development, and preservation.

We are thankful for the ongoing investment in NYC's supportive housing stock. However, increased attention must be placed on Supportive Housing preservation. If we do not take preservation seriously, we will lose vital units. For every available unit of supportive housing in NYC, there are 12 eligible households – the need still far outweighs the available supply. Therefore, we ask that this year's budget includes \$65.3 million to preserve 325 units in FY2027, this would entail \$44 million in Capital and \$21.3 million in Services & Operating expenses. We also support increased investments in the Moving On model in supportive housing to support tenants who no longer need intensive support but still need affordable housing.

Finally, we must work towards streamlining our housing placements, whether that is into supportive housing, CityFHEPS vouchers, or into HPD homeless set asides. We must aim to get as many people at risk of homelessness or people currently experiencing homelessness into available permanent housing without delay.

We look forward to working with the City Council to ensure that this year's budget delivers for all New Yorkers. If you have any additional questions, please contact me at vleahy@hsunited.org.

**HOUSING AND BUILDINGS COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING MARCH 24, 2026
WRITTEN TESTIMONY PROVIDED BY
HOUSING AND SERVICES INC.**

Housing and Services, Inc. (“HSI”) is a member of the Supportive Housing Network and supports all the advocacy points presented by the Network for this meeting.

HSI provides permanent supportive housing to 725 households in Manhattan and the Bronx, consisting of 625 congregate units and 100 scattered sites units.

HSI urges the City to invest \$65.3 million to preserve 325 Single Room Occupancy (“SRO”) supportive housing units in FY 2024 including \$44 million in capital funding and \$21.3 million in services and operating support.

HSI's Cecil project is a perfect example of why this funding is necessary.

First generation supportive housing:

HSI is proud to have developed the Cecil project in 1988. Cecil is one of NYC’s first generation of permanent supportive housing and has proven that permanent supportive housing is the most cost-effective and humane way to end chronic homelessness. When HSI acquired Cecil in 1986 via a triple-net ground lease from Harlem Community Development Corporation, the building was an abandoned and derelict Single Room Occupancy hotel which had formerly housed the world-famous Minton’s Playhouse, the birthplace of beep-bop jazz. With a construction loan from HPD, Cecil is an 89-unit SRO with multiple shared bathrooms and community kitchens on each residential floor.

Back in 1988, the Cecil was state-of-the-art supportive housing and pioneered the Housing First philosophy that skeptics thought was doomed to failure. The success of Cecil and other first generation SRO supportive housing paved the way for improved expectations for supportive housing. The new HPD standard for supportive housing is studio apartments with a full bathroom and a kitchenette. In a way, Cecil and other first-generation supportive housing projects have become victims of their own success. Despite its excellent location at West 118th Street and St. Nicholas Avenue, Cecil’s small unit sizes combined with shared bathrooms and community kitchens, make it non-competitive with the current generation of supportive housing.

Low revenues and increasing expenses:

Cecil’s revenues consist of project-based Section, HRA/DHS and DOHMH contract revenue and commercial rent.

Eighty-six of Cecil's 89 residential units have project-based Section 8 administered by HPD. Cecil's HPD regulatory agreement requires that all units be rent stabilized, with tenant incomes at or below 60% of Area Median Income. Cecil has had an HRA/DHS contract since the mid-1990's and, since 2011, a DOHMH contract for 30 NY NY III tenants.

Cecil's max legal rent was established by HPD in 2012. A common issue shared by many first-generation SRO's is the Rent Board's not providing any significant increases for SROs in decades. It was not until 2024, when HPD allowed Cecil to increase rents via a 610 Regulatory Agreement amendment. While the 610 amendment rents have been very helpful, they cannot mitigate the years when Cecil had no rent increases – during COVID and amid years of inflation driven expenses.

The DOHMH contract diversified revenue sources for Cecil's on-site social services. Thankfully, the DOHMH contract has provided for reasonable contract increases for DOHMH's 30 units.

Cecil's HRA/DHS contract is for SRO Supportive Services funded jointly by NYS NYSSPH and NYC. From FY 2002 to FY 2025, contract values went from \$232,819 to \$251,458, an 8% increase while the Consumer Price Index rose 76%. Thankfully, we understand that the FY 26 contract value may be increased to \$322,715. While we are grateful for the FY 26 increase, the FY 26 increase does not mitigate the many years of underfunding. The combination of low rent and stagnant HRA/DHS funding has significantly impaired Cecil's ability to accumulate reserves necessary to fund any meaning building renovations to make Cecil competitive with newer generation supportive housing.

While HSI is proud of its guardianship of the Minton's Playhouse Jazz Club, a local and world-wide cultural heritage site, its revenue production has been inconsistent. The club is too small to be self-sustaining and is marketed as a package, with a larger adjoining restaurant that subsidizes the jazz club. While it is an honor to house the jazz club, the necessary club/restaurant tenancy is often an uncertain prospect given the ephemeral nature of these businesses. Despite our best efforts, these spaces have been vacant over the last year,

On-going significant long-term maintenance:

In 2009, Cecil received a construction rehab loan from HPD Supportive Housing Loan Program (SHLP) to address aged out boiler and domestic hot water system, extend sprinkler into every residential unit and a second elevator to ensure continuous service to its elderly residents when the original elevator has break downs. However, HPD no longer provides this kind of rehab loan.

Lack of HPD SRO Preservation Funding

Unlike in the past, there is no single source of HPD funding for the rehabilitation and preservation of supportive housing, including SRO buildings like Cecil. Supportive housing typically does not

generate sufficient cash flow to pay debt service on private construction debt and therefore relies on “soft” housing agency debt. The average per unit funding of approx. \$135,000 necessitates multiple HPD funding sources, often incompatible, which even when combined are not sufficient to cover the rehabilitation costs. Additionally, it is exceedingly difficult to combine NYC and NYS funding sources. Case in point: After exploring HPD funding, and exhausting other NYS sources, pre-development planning for a current HSI-SRO rehab project, the Narragansett, started in March 2023. Three years later, no construction start date is confirmed by the NYS funder. The process delays and inefficiencies are costly and extremely challenging.

The Supportive Housing Network’s proposal to create a dedicated, single HPD funding source for SRO preservation will address the bottlenecks in the system, be cost effective and preserve an aging housing stock that is a vital supportive housing asset.

NYC LL97

While HSI readily embraces the objectives of Local Law 97 and Local Law 88, their implementation has been a very challenging unfunded mandate. The scope of the 2009 rehab did not consider the yet-to-be requirements of these laws. Cecil typically receives a Local Law 84 D rating. To date Cecil has implemented prescriptive measures mandated by LL97, including LL88 lighting requirements, and spent \$155,000 funded from operations on these measures. Local 97 prescriptive measures for Cecil have been challenging and costly.

As a five-story building, Cecil is not subject to the requirements of Local Law 11 (Facades). However, to ensure safety, HSI has undertaken inspections to look for potentially unsafe façade conditions and is currently expending a projected \$977,000 to address potentially unsafe issues.

To date Cecil has funded most of the required expenditure through intercompany loans from HSI as operating revenues are insufficient to fund such expenditures. This is not sustainable.

Future needs:

Cecil is not competitive with the newer generations of supportive housing studio apartments. At this time there is no funding for the due diligence required to make Cecil more competitive, such as the conversion of SRO units to studio additions.

Our studies to date show significant operating improvements could be achieved by electrification of the building. Of particular concern is building-wide air cooling, as climate change accelerates the number of days of dangerously excessive heat. Currently, Cecil cooling areas are insufficient. Without entire building air cooling we can foresee a day when Cecil will be inhabitable for its predominantly elderly and medically frail tenant population.

Conclusion:

There are currently no NYC funding sources sufficient to meet the needs to preserve Cecil as permanent supportive housing. Given the current affordable housing crisis, NYC cannot afford to lose any permanent supportive housing units.

It is imperative that the City invest in the proposed \$653 million SRO preservation.

The City must continue funding a 3% cost-of-living adjustment for City-contracted human services workers and pass intro 452, the Human Services Wage Equity Legislation sponsored by Council Member Stevens.

As permanent supportive housing, the condition of our buildings is of paramount importance. However, efforts to maintain our buildings will be for naught if the services we provide are substandard and do not meet the needs of our tenants. The supportive housing model requires a wide array of skilled workers to help our tenants achieve housing stability and each tenant's personal goals. The NYC Human Services sector and supportive housing staff are notoriously underpaid compared to other not-for-profit sectors and even comparable NYC government positions. A reliable COLA for our government contracts is an imperative and not a luxury. Given spiraling inflation and Rent Board increases, a 3% COLA, while gratefully appreciated, still leaves our staff treading water vis-à-vis their compensation's purchasing power. The last round of 3% COLA's was crucial to our ability to retain the skilled workers we require to fulfil our mission. We urge the City to pass intro 452 to enable us to continue to retain our hardworking essential staff.

We thank the Committee for this opportunity to provide written testimony.

Testimony of Housing Works
Before
The New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings
Regarding
Mayor's Preliminary Budget
March 24, 2026

Thank you, Chairperson Sanchez and Members of the Committee on Housing and Buildings, for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of Housing Works, a healing community founded in 1990 with a mission to end the dual crises of homelessness and AIDS. We currently provide a range of integrated medical, behavioral health, housing, and support services for over 15,000 low-income New Yorkers annually, including over 750 units of supportive housing, with a focus on the most marginalized and underserved—those facing the challenges of homelessness, HIV, mental health issues, substance use disorder, other chronic conditions, and incarceration. and, most recently, migrants displaced from their homes due to violence or other crises who seek safety and a better life in the United States.

Housing Works is also a founding member of the *End AIDS NY Community Coalition* (EtE Community Coalition), a group of over ninety healthcare centers, hospitals, and community-based organizations that are fully committed to ending AIDS as an epidemic in all New York communities and populations. New York City and State have made significant progress implementing the historic 2015 [*Ending the Epidemic \(EtE\) Blueprint*](#) recommendations developed collaboratively by HIV community members, providers, advocates, and public health authorities. Our EtE efforts enabled us to “bend the curve” of the epidemic by the end of 2019, decreasing HIV prevalence for the first time since the epidemic began. However, new challenges and troubling trends demand a sustained and even accelerated NYC HIV response if we are to reach our goals of ending our NYC HIV epidemic in every community and for all New Yorkers. New HIV diagnoses have increased in NYC in the last two years after decades of decline, with a 5.4% increase from 2023 to 2024, following a 6.9% increase from 2022 to 2023. Meanwhile, while HIV health outcomes have improved across all communities, stark and unacceptable disparities persist in HIV’s impact on Black and Latino/Hispanic communities, transgender New Yorkers, and young men who have sex with men. In 2024, Black and Latino/Hispanic New Yorkers accounting for 85% of people newly diagnosed with HIV in NYC, and 42% of people newly diagnosed with HIV lived in high- or very-high poverty ZIP codes. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated barriers to HIV prevention and care, suppressing uptake of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), HIV testing, and connection to care, and progress on improving HIV care outcomes have remained flat in recent years. New York City Council support has been critical to this progress, and we urge the Members of the Committee on Housing and Buildings to continue your support for the Council’s Pathways to Care initiative and other efforts to continue to advance our critical Ending the Epidemic goals.

At Housing Works, we believe as a core value that housing is healthcare and a basic human right. Our mission is to provide safe, secure, and stable housing to New Yorkers experiencing homelessness, employing a low-threshold, harm reduction approach that respects the dignity of every person. At Housing Works, we have witnessed firsthand both the powerful impact of safe, stable housing and the barriers posed by the underfunding and understaffing that cripples our City’s response to the affordable housing and homeless crises.

While we welcome the increased focus on affordable housing development in the Mayor's Preliminary Budget, it falls far short of the action necessary to address these challenges. As a developer and operator of supportive housing and housing with deep affordability, Housing Works will focus in this testimony on omissions in the Preliminary Budget that specifically hinder our efforts. We also include calls for action by the Council to transform our failed homeless response.

Transform the City's Failed Response to Homelessness and Behavioral Health Issues

Housing Works and the EtE Community Coalition continue to strongly oppose efforts to expand involuntary inpatient and outpatient commitment initiatives, and in particular any effort to involuntarily commit an individual based on a determination of "*substantial inability of the person to meet his or her basic need for food, clothing, shelter or medical care.*" For over 35 years, Housing Works has successfully employed low- threshold, harm reduction strategies to engage the most marginalized New Yorkers in effective care to address co-occurring medical, mental health, and substance use disorders. What we have learned first-hand is that New Yorkers struggling to cope with serious mental health issues face multiple, significant barriers to voluntary access to the care they seek, especially those who are also trying to survive without a safe, stable place to live. These often-insurmountable barriers include a lack of supportive housing, low reimbursement rates for needed services, a shortage of health care professionals, high caseloads, and low pay for contracted service workers that makes it difficult to recruit or retain staff. As one result, on any given day, there are approximately 1,400 people with serious mental illness in City jails, where mental health services are woefully inadequate, leaving our most vulnerable New Yorkers to cycle between the streets, shelters, and jails with little or no access to voluntary care.

Housing Works, on behalf of the vulnerable New Yorkers we serve and represent, are deeply disappointed by the resumption by this Administration of sweeps of homeless encampments. Regardless of the agency responsible for carrying out such sweeps, harassing people experiencing homelessness through sweeps of the subways or encampments of those who opt for survival in public rather than entering frightening shelters is not a solution. We must stop stigmatizing people experiencing homelessness, especially those who are dealing with untreated or undertreated chronic medical and/or behavioral health issues while trying to survive in shelter or on the streets.

As noted in the New York State Comptroller's report on [Services for the Unsheltered](#), New York City's unsheltered population continues to grow despite a dramatic increase in spending on services, there is little evidence that current efforts are effective in moving people from the streets into permanent housing, and it is critical that we develop a better understanding of what type of interventions are truly effective in meeting the needs of this most marginalized and vulnerable group of New Yorkers. Housing Works implore New York City to transform the City's ineffective response to the homelessness crisis by urgently adopting innovative, evidence-based approaches that will save lives and money.

We must stop treating mental illness and substance use disorder among low-income New Yorkers as criminal justice rather than public health issues and instead adopt harm reduction approaches that provide every New Yorker with the safe, stable housing necessary to engage in behavioral health care, including private rooms for those struggling with mental health issues. While we welcome the Mayor's acknowledgement that additional investments are needed to address the needs of unsheltered New Yorkers, it is important to note the ongoing barriers posed by existing models of care for those who have been afraid or unwilling to engage with the Department of Homeless

Services. Truly low-threshold facilities that combine a drop-in center with on-site medical and behavioral health care with private hotel rooms to provide transitional housing without preconditions are perhaps the most effective way to engage unsheltered persons with behavioral health needs who are unable or unwilling to access more traditional shelter or treatment programs.

Make a New York City Council Investment of \$12M Annually in a Meaningful, Evidence-Based Intervention to Address the Crises of Homelessness and Mental Health

After five years of fruitless efforts to work with the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS) to open an innovative new model of comprehensive housing and services for unsheltered New Yorkers, Housing Works seeks \$12M annually in New York City Council funding for the project, which would support at least 150 private safe haven rooms, a co-located drop in center with on-site medical and behavioral health crisis care, and access to a full range of health, mental health, and substance use services through a Housing Works Federally Qualified Health Center.

The model involves operating a drop-in center with co-located private safe haven transitional beds; its cornerstones include delivering on-site medical and behavioral health care through a harm reduction modality, prioritizing safe haven beds for drop-in center clients who reject “traditional” entryways into DHS shelters, and addressing chronic physical and behavioral health conditions that persist among drop-in and safe haven clients alike. These innovations were developed in thoughtful consultation with DHS and based on Housing Works’ experiences delivering DHS-funded services at the height of the COVID pandemic, including operating two DHS COVID isolation/quarantine hotels and providing medical and behavioral health services at all DHS COVID isolation sites citywide.

Between 2020 and 2023, Housing Works received both DHS and OMB approval to operate the proposed model at three distinct locations: Chelsea, Chinatown, and Jamaica. Unfortunately, in all three cases, the sites fell through for different reasons (in June 2020 the Chelsea hotel owner pulled out one week before opening, betting that NYC tourism would rebound; in May 2022 the hotels union persuaded the Mayor to object to and kill the Chinatown project; and in February 2023 the Jamaica hotel operator reneged on its deal with Housing Works to pursue—successfully—a more lucrative contract to use the site as a DHS City Sanctuary Facility).

Most recently, in 2025, Housing Works identified a former Holiday Inn on West 48th Street in Manhattan as a potential site. This location, a former DHS COVID quarantine hotel which Housing Works operated between 2021 and 2022, would have provided 166 private safe haven beds and 50 drop-in center chairs, and Housing Works proposed to acquire it through DHS’s nonprofit-owned (NPO) program to fund the acquisition and renovation, under which the site would have remained available for City use for a full 60 years, making this an excellent investment for New York City. Most significantly, the site was located two blocks from the Housing Works Westside Health Center, which provides robust primary and mental health care services, including services operated through our FQHC’s “Health Care for the Homeless” designation and our licensed Article 31 Office of Mental Health Program. The proximity of these two sites would have enabled a robust model of care that would supplement on-site medical and behavioral health crisis care with access to the full services available at the 48th Health Center, saving the City hundreds of thousands of dollars in staffing expenses. Unfortunately, however, DHS informed Housing Works that it would no longer support the project because they were only interested in facilities located at the ends of the transit lines in Coney Island, Staten Island, and the Bronx. Today, this facility is no longer for sale.

Despite these setbacks, Housing Works remains committed to bring its model of street homeless services to one of New York City’s most impacted neighborhoods such as Midtown West (including Hell’s Kitchen and edges of the Theater District and transit hub) which has long experienced an unmet need for street homeless services and substance use and mental health interventions. We propose to leverage our 35 years of experience providing housing, supportive services, and primary and behavioral health care to populations other providers deem “too difficult to serve.” Our goal is to pilot a model that 1) engages NYC’s hardest-to-reach populations who reject “traditional” DHS services, 2) provides sustained high-quality care to addresses chronic medical and mental health conditions, substance use, and overdose, 3) demonstrates long-term cost savings by reducing avoidable utilization of hospital emergency department and other city resources, and 4) works intensively with stabilized residents to secure appropriate permanent housing placements.

We seek a site with proximity to one of Housing Works’ six Federal Qualified Health Centers, to leverage the full range of medical and behavioral health care for “stabilization center” clients. As we understand that opioid use, overdose, and co-occurring medical and mental health conditions are among the top public health issues experienced by street homeless populations, we will focus on leveraging on-site medical and behavioral health teams who can provide 24/7 crisis intervention and navigate clients toward buprenorphine induction, ongoing mental health care, and other appropriate interventions available at one of our community health centers. Staff between the two sites would work hand in hand to monitor client progress and health outcomes through interdisciplinary team meetings, integrated case conferences, and shared client data across our common electronic medical record and case management systems.

In 2023, Housing Works was awarded a grant from the New York State Health Foundation (NYSHF) to conduct a rigorous academic evaluation of the proposed model; while the grant was returned when the last site fell through, NYSHF has graciously invited us to reapply when a new site becomes available. Through a multisector partnership of government, nonprofit, and academic partners, we hope to provide an evidence-based model that would strengthen New York City’s ability to better address unsheltered homelessness and its associated issues.

Increase Access to Supportive Housing and Housing With Deep Affordability

Take Action to Facilitate Affordable and Supportive Housing Development

Of course, addressing our housing and homeless crises requires substantial new City investments in housing with deep affordability, including supportive housing for those who need it. It is critical to stabilize HPD capital funding (\$3.25 billion in FY26) at a level of at least \$3.5 billion per year for FY27 through FY29 to prevent sharp production declines in these out years. Ensuring sufficient funding to adequately expand the City’s affordable and supportive housing stock is one of the most important issues facing New Yorkers that should be prioritized in the capital plan. We also call for doubling the set-aside in new affordable housing developments for homeless households from 15 to 30 percent, to produce at least 6,000 new apartments per year; and building an additional 6,000 apartments per year for households with extremely low incomes. The high delinquency rate in commercial buildings also presents an opportunity, and we call for a dedicated NYC funding stream and the appropriate level of zoning relief to convert these properties to affordable housing.

It is also necessary to provide higher per-unit subsidies to address construction cost inflation that post-pandemic have resulted in cost increases that exceed existing HPD subsidy caps. Gap financing

required ranges from \$50,000–\$100,000 per unit, depending on building type, labor structure, and sustainability requirements. On a 100-unit project, this equates to an additional \$5–10 million beyond currently available subsidies.

As a developer of affordable and supportive housing, Housing Works also calls for administrative action to streamline these efforts. Our developments are needlessly delayed by difficulties getting permits and approved certificates of occupancy. Correcting the understaffing at DOB and HPD must be essential. HPD’s vacancy rate remains around 15–16 percent, so we call for \$20–30 million annually to fully staff underwriting, legal, and project management functions. We also call for the establishment of a specific unit within DOB assigned to expedite supportive housing and affordable housing development.

Support Evidence-Based Housing First Harm Reduction Housing Interventions

From our beginning, Housing Works has been committed to a low-threshold, harm reduction approach to housing assistance, where admission and retention in housing is based on behaviors, rather than status as a drug user, person with mental health issues, or other condition. Residents are held accountable, as we all are, for the behaviors and conditions necessary to live safely with neighbors, are entitled to privacy within their own home, and are encouraged to feel safe to share behavioral health needs or crises without concern about jeopardizing housing security or being required to engage in a particular course of treatment. Our programs demonstrate that this approach works, empowering residents to take action to improve their health and wellbeing, as shown by the high rate of viral load suppression, consistently over 90%, among the formerly homeless people with HIV we house. We have successfully employed a “Housing First” approach for over 35 years, which prior to the current federal administration was widely acknowledged as an evidence-based model that was endorsed as best practice by HUD and HRSA.

On behalf of the homeless and formerly homeless New Yorkers we serve, we implore New York City leadership to continue to support and fund “housing first” low-threshold housing interventions from federal attacks. We are deeply grateful for New York State Attorney General Letitia James’ leadership in bringing a lawsuit and securing a temporary injunction to protect billions of dollars in U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development that provide housing and other services to help address homelessness through HUD’s Continuum of Care (CoC) program. For decades, CoC prioritized the “housing first” approach to fighting homelessness, providing immediate shelter to those in need without forcing them to meet burdensome requirements that can leave many without a safe place to sleep.

In November, the Trump administration attempted to impose new and illegal conditions on CoC grants that threaten to upend the services the program supports, including a drastic cut in funding for permanent supportive housing that could result in the eviction of some 7,000 formerly homeless households in New York City, barring CoC funding from organizations that acknowledge the existence of transgender or nonbinary individuals or that practice harm reduction, excluding programs that provide services for mental disabilities to prioritize those that only serve people with physical disabilities, and imposing new conditions to withhold funds from regions that do not conform their local homelessness laws to the administration’s priorities regarding sweeps of persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness and other forms of criminalization of homelessness.

It is critical for New York City to stand firm in its support for evidence-based policies and housing interventions demonstrated to end homelessness for individuals and improve lives, and to protect formerly homeless New Yorkers and those still experiencing homelessness from federal attacks on critical funding for these programs. The City projects a decline of approximately \$3.6 billion in federal funding citywide, including housing and human services. We strongly urge the Administration and City Council to expand City-funded rental assistance and contingency reserves, likely requiring funding in the hundreds of millions over several years to offset federal voucher losses and program cuts.

Honor the City's Commitment to Create and Preserve Supportive Housing

Housing Works welcomed last year's actions to accelerate realization the City's commitment to develop 15,000 new NYC-funded supportive housing units by 2030, including shifting the focus of the 15/15 from the scattered site model to the creation of congregate, single site supportive housing units, and the funding provided for rental assistance over three years to support and preserve 15/15 units. We urge the City Council to ensure that the NYC 15/15 initiative is employed to accelerate production and preserve older housing stock. It is equally important for the City to amend eligibility for the program to remove, to the extent possible, the requirement that residents meet the federal definition of "chronic homelessness." This definition can be difficult or impossible for many people experiencing homelessness to demonstrate, and while we acknowledge that it is a requirement for programs funded at least in part by Federal Continuum of Care homeless housing funding, the City should not employ the definition to define eligibility for any program that does not receive CoC funding.

We also call on the Administration to provide adequate operating and services costs for all supportive housing, of approximately \$25,000–\$35,000 per unit annually. To meet the operating and services costs of existing supportive housing and new 15/15 units as they come online, it is necessary for the City to baseline \$150M to \$200M annually to cover these costs.

Housing Works also joins the call for an investment of \$65.3 million in FY27 (\$44M in Capital and \$21.3M in Services & Operating) to preserve 325 units of supportive housing that is at risk due to disrepair and insufficient operating funding. More than 7,600 units in aging buildings could be in need of preservation based on their precarious rental subsidies and service contracts, and threats to Continuum of Care funding described above pose an additional risk. At a time when there are twelve eligible households for every unit of NYC supportive housing, we cannot afford to lose a single unit.

Improve and Expand the CityFHEPs Program

Housing Works is grateful for the improvements to the CityFHEPs program enacted by the City Council in 2023 and fully support efforts to enforce their full implementation by the Administration. We urge the City Council to continue to pursue full implementation of CityFHEPS expansion approved by the Council, and to seek clarification that access to CityFHEPS vouchers extends to all residents of New York City emergency or transitional housing, including those operated by DHS, DYCD, HRA, MOCJ, HPD, HRO, HASA, etc., homeless drop-in centers, transitional housing, and street homeless households who don't already have access to a rent subsidy.

The expansion and implementation of CityFHEPS are crucial tools in realizing our shared goal of a more affordable New York for working-class and low-income New Yorkers. To accomplish this

goal, New York City must invest in cost-effective solutions like CityFHEPS that keep people in their homes and get people housed and out of the expensive and disruptive cycles of shelter and other institutional settings.

As just one example, The MOCJ Emergency and Transitional Housing Program (MOCJ ETH) provides up to twelve months of a safe stable place to live for people leaving incarceration without housing, while providing vocational, educational, and therapeutic services as well as assistance to secure permanent housing. Housing Works, as one of several non-profit MOCJ ETH program providers, provides 356 beds combined with skills building, job training, access to medical and behavioral health services, and housing placement assistance. Originally initiated during the COVID crisis, the MOCJ ETH program has been continued and expanded in recognition of the fact that New Yorkers leaving incarceration often require housing assistance and supportive services to make a successful transition back into the community. However, while many of our program participants complete job training and secure employment they cannot afford housing on the open rental market.

During the COVID crisis, MOCJ ETH program participants had access to Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV) under the Housing Choice Section 8 program, but the supply of those vouchers has dried up, and our MOCJ ETH participants are not eligible for any other housing subsidies. Like other supportive housing programs for the justice-involved population, the MOCJ Transitional Housing Programs generate reductions in shelter and jail use, inpatient hospitalizations and related Medicaid costs, and substance use. However, this worthwhile investment is squandered when at the end of a successful 12-month transitional housing stay, participants who have completed educational and job training programs, and are stable and employed, are pushed back into homelessness in the mass shelters or on the streets, and in the worst-case scenario end up back in jail. It makes no economic sense to spend over \$130/day on shelter or over \$500K annually to keep someone at Rikers, when the City has invested \$50K to \$60K annually in supportive transitional housing but is unwilling to afford participants a housing voucher that would cost only \$25K to \$36K a year.

Even with expansion, as you know the CityFHEPs process is plagued by unpredictable and lengthy delays, rampant discrimination from landlords and brokers, and administrative missteps that discourage applicants, alienate landlords, and prolong homelessness. We urge the Council to address aspects of the program that undermine its efficacy, including using your oversight authority to hold DSS accountable for streamlining the CityFHEPS application and fixing administrative delays that prevent households from obtaining shopping letters and cause households to experience months-long delays in processing housing packets. These fixes will enable households to move out of homelessness quickly and avoid eviction. Likewise, we urge the Council to hold the Administration accountable to reverse the CityFHEPS rent hike that would increase working tenants' share from 30% to 40% after 5 years, as required by Council. As noted below, we also ask the Council to increase funding, as noted below, for enforcement of source of income protections.

Fund Non-Profit Legal Services Organizations to Address Source of Income Discrimination

To maximize the effectiveness of existing NYC voucher programs, including HASA rental assistance and CityFHEPs vouchers requires more consistent and effective legal action to enforce the City prohibition on source of income discrimination. Housing Works and the End AIDS NY Community Coalition respectfully assert that in addition to any enforcement resources added to the City's Human Rights Division, at least \$4M in funding be made available annually to support contracts with non-profit organizations with a record of successful litigation to address the

continued illegal discrimination by brokers and landlords who refuse to accept government-funded rental vouchers.

Invest in the City's Human Services Workforce and Infrastructure

The Preliminary Budget plan also fails to make critically needed investments in the City's non-profit sector.

Invest in the City's human services workforce.

The Preliminary Budget plan once again this year fails to make critically needed investments in the City's non-profit workforce. Housing and homeless service providers, and other members of the human services workforce, made up predominantly of women of color, are grossly underpaid. Housing Works, as part of the #JustPay Campaign, urge the city to invest in the human services workforce so that New Yorkers receive consistently high quality and effective social services. Specifically, we call on the City to continue to fund the 3% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for City-contracted human services workers from 2026-2027 to uphold the City's multi-year COLA deal commitment, and to Pass Wage Equity Legislation (Int 0452-2026), which would align nonprofit and government human services job titles, and through that, raise salaries for nonprofit human services workers.

Support Human Services Agencies with Adequate Indirect Funding

It is also time for meaningful action to address the underfunding of critical non-profit infrastructure needs. Non-profit human service organizations that have been on the front lines of the HIV, viral hepatitis, COVID-19, and mpox responses face ongoing and new challenges as the result of years of severe underinvestment in essential infrastructure needs. While we welcomed adoption by the City several years ago of a contracting agency's approved Federal indirect rate after years of inadequate funding, to date total contract amounts still have not been adjusted to reflect the additional infrastructure funding, and social service agencies employing their approved indirect rate are required to cut direct services by an amount equal to the additional indirect costs covered. Housing Works and the End AIDS NY Community Coalition call on the Council to support the funding required to amend each existing NYC human services contract as soon as practicable to increase the total contract amount to reflect the contracting agency's approved Federal indirect rate "below the line" without impacting contract funding for direct services.

Ensure That Agency Savings Efforts Preserve Essential City Programs and Human Services

Housing Works supports the stated intent of the Mamdani Administration's Executive Order 12, directing the appointment of Agency Savings Officers to identify streamlined processes and efficiencies to generate savings for the City. It is critical, however, that the City pursue these goals without undermining the staff and resources needed to meet the most basic needs of New Yorkers. Arbitrary cuts and hiring freezes under the previous administration undermined many City agency functions, resulting in massive delays in supportive housing placements, processing applications for public assistance, food stamps, and rental subsidies, as well as crippling delays in reimbursement of non-profit providers for services delivered. These delays are a direct result of agency understaffing at City agencies responsible for delivering human services and social supports. As one example, HRA's HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA) is chronically understaffed, making it difficult or impossible for housing providers to meet the needs of New Yorkers with HIV experiencing homelessness.

Specifically, we implore the City Council and the Administration to proceed carefully with any cost-saving initiatives that would impact the essential services delivered by the Department of Social Services, the Department of Homeless Services, DOHMH, and the community-based providers they fund, and to instruct Agency Savings Officers within these agencies to in fact consider the need for restoration of funding and/or staff lines required for efficient delivery of services for our most vulnerable neighbors. Agencies responsible for managing public health and wellbeing, as well as their non-profit partners, must be protected from systemic funding cuts that undermine resources needed to protect public health and meet basic human needs

In conclusion, Housing Works calls on the Council and the Administration to be bold when it comes to addressing NYC's unprecedented crisis of homelessness and housing instability. We call for dramatically increased investment in affordable and supportive housing, for Council oversight of the City's homeless response, and implementation and rigorous evaluation of new approaches to our housing and homelessness crises that drive poor individual and public health outcomes among NYC's most marginalized residents.

Thank you for your consideration. Please direct any questions to Anthony Feliciano, Vice President of Community Mobilization at Housing Works, Inc., at a.feliciano@housingworks.org.

**JOINT TESTIMONY OF RIGHT TO COUNSEL LEGAL SERVICES PROVIDERS FOR
THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL, COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS,
PRELIMINARY BUDGET HEARING**

March 24, 2026

**BRONX DEFENDERS
CAMBA LEGAL SERVICES
LEGAL SERVICES NYC
MOBILIZATION FOR JUSTICE
NEW YORK LEGAL ASSISTANCE GROUP
NORTHERN MANHATTAN IMPROVEMENT CORPORATION
THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY**

INTRODUCTION

Thank you to the City Council’s Housing and Buildings Committee for the opportunity to testify about the crucial need to improve the City’s contracting process and the need for increased funding and contract reform to meet the mandate of the Right to Counsel (RTC) program to best serve New York City residents.

Over the last 9 years, the critical Right to Counsel program has been well established in housing proceedings in New York City. Studies consistently show that tenants with legal representation in eviction proceedings remain in their homes and that RTC programs reduce the number of eviction filings. In New York City, 84% of tenants with an attorney remain in their homes, while eviction filings and default judgments have dropped by 30% since the implementation of the RTC program.¹ Furthermore, legal representation results in fewer judgments of possession and lower money judgments. The impact of RTC goes beyond keeping families housed. Evictions have far-reaching consequences, not only affecting housing stability but also impacting employment, physical health, and mental well-being. Even when displacement cannot be avoided, representation ensures that tenants obtain valuable time to navigate related challenges, such as finding alternative housing or stabilizing their finances.²

¹ See, “In the most expensive city in the country, evictions remain lower than before COVID-19,” by John Pablo Garnhem, The Eviction Lab (January 14, 2025), <https://evictionlab.org/in-the-most-expensive-city-in-the-country-evictions-remain-lower-than-before-covid-19/>, last visited March 18, 2026.

² See, The Effect of Legal Representation on Tenant Outcomes in Housing Court: Evidence from New York City’s Universal Access Program, by Mike Cassidy, Janet Currie. Journal of Public Economics Volume 222, June 2023.

The benefits of RTC extend beyond the tenants themselves—it also saves the City money. By reducing the number of people who enter the shelter system, the program alleviates one of the most expensive items of the City’s budget.³ **In Fiscal Year 2024, DHS spent approximately \$2.22 billion on adult and family shelter operations, and the average length of stay for single adults in shelter remained longer than a year—378 days in Fiscal Year 2025.** The funding required to fully implement RTC -- \$350 million – is a fraction of that amount, making it a cost-effective tool to address the housing crisis, preserve affordable housing, and stabilize vulnerable communities.

This testimony highlights the critical issues currently facing Right to Counsel (RTC) providers in New York City, beginning with the ongoing delays in payment that threaten our ability to sustain our operations. Despite timely registration of contracts with the Human Resources Administration (HRA), some providers have been unable to invoice for services since July, placing immense financial strain on our organizations, particularly smaller ones. This delay, coupled with a proposed 10% penalty on payments and a recent policy that reimburses only 90% of invoices, undermines the fiscal viability of our programs and puts at risk the delivery of high-quality legal services.

Additionally, the FY25-27 RTC contracts fall far short of addressing the growing need for legal representation in eviction cases. The overall amount of funding fails to meet the demand for legal representation – in fact funding covers only 36% of the eviction filings each year. Moreover, the current contract’s proposed case rates are insufficient to cover the costs of providing competent, holistic representation. There are widely disparate case rates across providers which should be right sized to ensure that each organization is properly compensated for the true cost of the work.

Specifically, we urge the City to take immediate action to reform its current contracting process which is marked by significant disorganization and includes delays in payment that jeopardize provider’s ability to provide crucial legal services to clients. We also urge the City to reform the FY 25-27 RTC contracts which are greatly unequal across provider organizations and simply do not provide for funding sufficient to meet the demand for representation in eviction cases throughout the City.

I. The City Should Reform its Current Contracting Process.

A. The City’s Current Contracting Process Is Marked by Significant Disorganization.

The City’s current contracting process is marked by significant disorganization, including delay in registering contracts, failure to timely allocate and disburse funds, and inadequate clarity regarding reimbursement procedures. Together these issues pose significant challenges to nonprofit organizations contracted to provide services on behalf of New York City.

³ See, <https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2025/03/Department-of-Homeless-Services.pdf> and <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2026/dhs.pdf>.

Nonprofit organizations face significant disadvantages in comparison to City agencies when it comes to receiving funding to provide services. While City agencies begin the fiscal year with their funding already allocated and confirmed, nonprofits are left waiting for funding confirmation, often for months into the fiscal year. This delay in securing funding allocations and awards creates operational challenges and financial uncertainty for nonprofits, undermining their ability to deliver essential services to New Yorkers who rely on them. Additionally, the City's registration of the respective contracts can also take months, if not years, which further delays the availability of funds and wreaks havoc on nonprofits' budgets and financial statements.

Furthermore, nonprofits are subjected to a complex, bureaucratic reimbursement process that is characterized by frequent changes in rules, requirements, and deadlines. This lack of clarity and consistency creates further inefficiencies and delays, forcing organizations to spend valuable time and funding navigating a convoluted system rather than focusing on their core mission of serving clients.

The City must ensure that nonprofits receive their funding allocations in a timely manner at the beginning of each fiscal year. Delayed confirmation of funding forces organizations to operate without financial certainty, placing their operations, staff, and services at risk. By aligning the timing of nonprofit funding with City agencies and ensuring timely contract registration, the City can level the playing field and allow nonprofits to plan and execute their programs without interruption.

In addition to timely funding confirmation, nonprofits require a clear and consistent set of reimbursement guidelines to minimize confusion and ensure that payments are processed quickly and efficiently. The City should provide detailed and stable guidance on reimbursement procedures, clearly outlining the expectations and documentation requirements upfront. Furthermore, the City must avoid sudden changes to reimbursement rules mid-year, which can create serious operational disruptions and financial challenges for nonprofits.

The City must also streamline the contracting process itself, reducing unnecessary paperwork and bureaucratic hurdles that slow down the approval and payment process. Nonprofits should be able to enter into contracts and submit invoices without facing excessive delays due to administrative red tape. Increasing contract processing staff, and establishing clear and realistic timelines for approvals, would help ensure that contracts and payments move forward without unnecessary delay. By making the contracting process more efficient and user-friendly, the City will allow nonprofits to focus on serving clients, rather than spending valuable resources navigating an unnecessarily complicated and inefficient system.

Finally, to address cash flow challenges, the City should implement pre-approved advances or interim payments based on established milestones. This approach would help nonprofits cover operating expenses and ensure that they can continue to serve their communities while waiting for full reimbursement. Advances should be issued promptly and proportionally, reflecting the work being done, so that nonprofits have the necessary financial flexibility to maintain their operations.

By implementing these reforms, the City can reduce the operational burdens placed on nonprofit organizations, enabling them to better serve New Yorkers in need. Streamlining the contracting and funding processes will lead to more effective service delivery, reduced administrative costs,

and a more sustainable nonprofit sector that is better equipped to fulfill its vital role in the community.

Recommendation

The City should align the timing of nonprofit funding with that of City agencies so nonprofits contracted to deliver services on behalf of the City can do so without interruption or delay. The City should also provide clear, upfront direction on reimbursement expectations and processes, reducing the bureaucratic hurdles nonprofits must cross in order to receive funding. The City should also implement pre-approved advances and interim payments to alleviate ongoing cash-flow problems plaguing nonprofit providers.

B. The City Should Pay Nonprofits Timely to Avoid Jeopardizing Providers' Ability to Deliver Crucial Legal Services to Clients.

The most urgent issue facing Right to Counsel (RTC) providers is the ongoing delay in receiving payment on contracts with the Human Resources Administration (HRA), which includes critical funding for RTC and the Anti-Harassment Tenant Protection Program (AHTP), and is greatly impeding providers' ability to provide crucial legal services to clients as well as sustain basic operations as nonprofit organizations.

While our contracts were registered on time, most of the nonprofit legal service providers that offer essential housing legal work for low-income and vulnerable tenants have not yet been able to invoice for all of their costs, due to the City's delays in approving our FY26 budgets. As a result, many RTC providers have now gone nine months without being able to fully invoice, except for limited advances that fail to cover providers' full costs. These outstanding amounts are on top of the significant amounts owed to providers for FY25 contracts.

Payment delays are threatening the viability of our organizations, especially for smaller nonprofits, and jeopardize our provision of legal services to those facing eviction or housing instability. The delays represent millions of dollars to smaller providers, and tens of millions to larger providers, causing financial strain to small and large providers alike. These delays not only jeopardize our capacity to meet payroll but also undermine our ability to fulfill our mission of providing high-quality, timely legal representation to those most in need, many of whom are facing imminent eviction.

Such delays often force nonprofit providers to subsidize their services with private dollars while waiting for payment from the City. Organizations frequently must rely on reserves or lines of credit simply to continue operating, incurring interest costs and taking on financial risk in order to sustain services that the City has contracted them to provide. These borrowing costs represent resources that could otherwise be used to represent additional tenants and families in need.

While the advance on baseline City contracts this year was an appreciable improvement, we are now well beyond the period these advances cover, and we have no way to receive additional payment on these contracts beyond these advances. Even though HRA has been working to resolve this issue, providers are nearly nine months into the current fiscal year and many are *still* waiting for budget approvals in order to invoice for their services, and all have experienced payment delays

for services they have been able to invoice. Nonprofit RTC providers need to invoice monthly to ensure they have enough cash to make payroll, and to continue providing much needed services, especially now that RTC contracts, with the expansion of the program, account for large percentages of providers' overall organizational budgets. Some organizations are already relying on or about to exhaust lines of credit. If providers don't have money to pay their attorneys and paralegals because of HRA contractual delays, their work will come to a screeching halt, completely frustrating the purpose of the RTC program. Nonprofits cannot continue to operate this way. It is simply unsustainable.

This existential threat is further compounded by HRA's position that, in implementing a provision that providers must meet performance milestones to earn 10% of the contract amount, HRA will pay the nonprofit providers only 90% of their invoices, whether they are meeting performance milestones or not. This plan, only shared with providers in mid-October 2024 after contracts were bid and issued (and not referenced in any contractual document) is disastrous for nonprofit RTC providers. Providers do not have reserves to await reimbursement for money they have spent – reimbursements that may not come if milestones cannot be met. This is an extremely damaging way to implement a new performance-based payment provision. This scheme unnecessarily undermines the effort to expand and improve this program for New Yorkers in need.

Recommendation

As the City continues to disentangle the bureaucratic morass that has utterly upended the orderly registration of contracts and payment of invoices, to ensure that RTC providers have sufficient cash to operate, the City must (1) allocate additional advances for 75% of the contract amounts immediately; and (2) commit to additional monthly advances until it is current in the payment of invoices submitted by RTC providers.

Further, the City must pay the full 100% on invoices as they are submitted.

II. The Providers Have Significant Concerns about the FY25-27 RTC Contract

A. The Funding Falls Far Short of Meeting the Need for Representation.

Despite the universally understood success of the Right to Counsel program, the vast majority of tenants face eviction in our City without any hope of having a lawyer represent them.

According to the New York State Unified Court System's Statewide Eviction information, residential eviction filings in 2025 in New York City totaled 119,845.⁴ The City is funding only 33,000 full representation cases each year⁵ (and the reality of these poorly funded contracts is that the City-funded providers could afford to represent 22,700 households in eviction cases last year

⁴ New York State Unified Court System Statewide Eviction Information available at: <https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjojZGE3NzljYmItYTBMZC00OGI2LTliYTgtYzY5ZjI0N2U0MwYxIiwidCI6IjM0NTZmZTkYLVNiZDEtNDA2ZC1iNWZzLTUzNjRiZWwYUzYzMyJ9>. Last visited March 16, 2026.

⁵ NYC Comptroller's Report, Evictions Up, Representation Down: How New York City is Undermining the Right to Counsel, May 2, 2025, <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/evictions-up-representation-down/>, last accessed March 18, 2026.

– a record high⁶). In contrast, the Independent Budget Office found that 50,000 tenants are eligible for full representation under RTC each year.⁷ **This means that fewer than half of the eligible tenants were provided with full representation.** This left over 27,300 cases last year where eligible tenants had no hope of getting a lawyer under the Right to Counsel program.

This harmful deficiency is borne out by the data on representation levels in housing court. Of the residential eviction cases filed on March 9, 2025, which have now been pending for more than a year, only 38% of those cases ever ended up receiving representation.⁸ Of the cases filed on January 11, 2026, and having at least 2 appearances, only 12% of those tenants have a lawyer representing them currently.

The City is severely under-funding a program that is objectively successful in both moral and economic terms. The RTC program boasts an extremely high success rate in preventing evictions and other collateral consequences. Every eviction prevented by the program creates huge savings to the City by avoiding shelter costs, brings the City closer into compliance with its own RTC law, and protects the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

Recommendation

The City should increase funding for Right to Counsel to a level sufficient for legal services providers to provide high-quality, holistic services to **all** eligible cases. There has to be sufficient funding to meet the demand for representation in the new cases being filed and the backlog of eviction defense cases pending without representation.

B. The Contracts Do Not Cover the Full Cost of Providing Anti-Eviction Services.

Eviction defense proceedings are complex and require significant time to resolve. New York City has some of the most robust and complicated housing laws in the country. Important laws, such as the Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act of 2019 and the Good Cause Eviction Law passed in 2024, have increased critical tenant protections while also adding to the complexities of tenant defense. As a result, providers must increase staff training to stay current with the law and attorneys must dedicate more time per case. Notably, these changes have all occurred in the last few years. Since 2018, providers have seen a 24% increase in how many hours it takes to resolve a case, while increased administrative and training burdens mean that staff have fewer hours available to do casework.

The City should appropriate additional funds to the Right to Counsel Program so that each provider can receive the funding it needs to operate an effective program. Providers must be resourced to staff their programs appropriately, comply with reporting and programmatic requirements, train

⁶ NYC Office of Civil Justice, FY 25 Annual Report, https://www.nyc.gov/assets/hra/downloads/pdf/services/civiljustice/OCJ_Annual_Report_2025.pdf

⁷ The Expansion of New York City's Right to Counsel Program, NYC Independent Budget Office Report, September 2025 at 2,

<https://www.ibo.nyc.gov/assets/ibo/downloads/pdf/community-and-social-services/2025/2025-septemberthe-expansion-of-nyc-right-to-counsel-program.pdf>, last accessed March 18, 2026.

⁸ NYC Eviction Crisis Monitor, <https://www.righttocounselnyc.org/nycrisismonitor>, last accessed March 16, 2026.

and supervise staff, retain experienced advocates, and deliver the holistic representation that tenants need. That includes not only attorneys, but also paralegals, social workers, administrative staff, and infrastructure supports such as finance, HR, and IT. While legal representation may stop an eviction in the immediate term, stabilizing a household often requires benefits advocacy, social work support, and coordinated follow-up. Underfunding these functions undermines the effectiveness of the program as a whole and leaves families vulnerable to repeated housing instability.

Before the RFX process, providers collected data showing that the average cost of holistically defending an eviction case with fair staff compensation and adequate program support was approximately \$7,500 per case. Since then, costs have only risen due to longer case timelines, new legal protections, inflation, and the operational burdens associated with delayed contract payments and borrowing costs. But even that figure should be understood as a benchmark, not the sole measure of program need. The City should recognize that organizations vary in size, structure, staffing models, and institutional capacity, and funding must reflect those differences if the program is to succeed.

During the negotiation process for the current contract, providers were pressed to lower their proposed budgets toward an artificially constrained average. Some were encouraged to move as close as possible to \$3,500 per reportable case; at least one provider was told the average case rate was \$4,100 and was asked to reduce its proposal accordingly. OCJ strongly implied that bids would be rejected if providers did not lower their rates. This process was incompatible with the City's stated goal of allowing providers to identify their own costs and undermined the possibility of building a sustainable, effective program.

The results were predictable. Some providers accepted funding levels far below the actual cost of delivering services because they were committed to continuing this essential work. As a result, many RTC providers report that they are now operating programs that are underfunded relative to their staffing, supervision, infrastructure, and service obligations. This underfunding strains program quality, contributes to unsustainable workloads, hampers recruitment and retention, and limits providers' ability to deliver the holistic representation that tenants require. It also disproportionately harms smaller and community-based providers, which are often more dependent on RTC funding and less able to absorb structural shortfalls.

As Housing Courts continue scheduling cases at near pre-pandemic levels and as provider costs continue to rise, the City cannot maintain an effective Right to Counsel program by relying on funding assumptions that do not reflect the actual cost of the work. Every provider must receive the resources necessary to run an effective program, and contract funding must be aligned with the real operational needs of each organization.

Recommendation

The City must ensure that additional funds are appropriated so that every RTC provider is funded at the level necessary to run an effective program. Funding should not be driven by an artificially flattened case-rate metric, but by the actual cost of delivering high-quality, holistic anti-eviction representation within each organization.

C. Additional RTC Contract Issues

(1) The 10% Reduction in Compensation Should Be Eliminated or at Least Suspended.

In FY25, the Office of Civil Justice (OCJ) implemented a new contractual penalty for nonprofit legal services providers that imposes a **10% funding reduction** for failing to meet metrics on a newly created performance scorecard. This measure exacerbates the challenges already faced by providers and undermines the fundamental goals of the Right to Counsel (RTC) program.

Compounding the impact of the 10% penalty, the metrics used by OCJ to evaluate providers were unclear prior to the first evaluation in January 2025. Even after that evaluation, the written guidance issued by OCJ has remained vague, and significant confusion persists about how the scorecard metrics are calculated and how providers will be evaluated in future review periods. This lack of transparency makes it difficult for providers to plan staffing, manage caseloads, and ensure compliance with contractual expectations.

Providers are also frequently at the mercy of systemic delays that are outside their control, including Housing Court backlogs, congested court calendars, inefficient court administration, delays in obtaining public benefits assistance, unresponsive opposing counsel, and evolving legal standards that affect case timelines and outcomes. Penalizing providers for failing to meet rigid quantitative benchmarks disregards these external factors and unfairly shifts risk onto nonprofit organizations.

The penalty also creates **perverse incentives** that may undermine the quality of legal representation. In an effort to meet contractual benchmarks, organizations may feel pressure to prioritize quantitative outputs over substantive outcomes, potentially taking on more cases than their staff can reasonably handle or resolving cases prematurely. These dynamics risk compromising the quality of representation that the RTC program was designed to guarantee.

Notably, **this type of performance-penalty contract structure is not used for other indigent defense systems in New York City**, such as criminal or family court representation. Criminal defense providers funded through the City and State, including institutional defender offices and assigned counsel programs, generally receive stable funding structures designed to ensure representation, rather than contracts that impose financial penalties tied to case-processing metrics. Similarly, attorneys providing representation in Family Court matters such as parent defense matters or custody cases are not subject to comparable contractual scorecards that reduce organizational funding based on performance metrics tied to case throughput.

The absence of similar penalty structures in other indigent defense contexts reflects a core principle: **legal representation for marginalized New Yorkers requires stable funding and professional independence, not financial penalties tied to outcomes influenced by court systems and external actors**. Applying a punitive metric-based model to housing defense, while other right-to-counsel systems in New York City rely on more stable funding frameworks—creates an inequitable and destabilizing structure for RTC providers.

Finally, the penalty provision has broader downstream implications for the City itself. Weakening RTC providers through financial penalties increases the likelihood of evictions, which in turn impose significant costs on municipal systems, including emergency shelter, public assistance, and

healthcare services. From a cost-benefit perspective, adequately funding and supporting RTC providers is far more fiscally responsible than penalizing them within an already underfunded system.

Recommendation

The City should eliminate or suspend the 10% performance penalty. At a minimum, OCJ should assess its written guidelines detailing how scorecard metrics are calculated and evaluated. The City should also incorporate flexibility into the evaluation process when providers are unable to meet quantitative metrics due to systemic factors outside of their control.

(2) Rollovers and Brief Services Should Be Counted and Funded.

The current contracts, in sharp contrast to the first nine years of the RTC program, no longer allow cases continuing beyond one year to be “rolled over” and reported in subsequent fiscal years. This change ignores that eviction cases are complicated and often last beyond a year. Disallowing RTC providers from reporting rollover cases as part of their deliverables creates a perverse incentive for providers to prioritize “easy” cases and de-prioritize representing tenants with complex and time-intensive cases. Any incentivization of one case or another caused by contract terms is fundamentally repugnant to the letter and spirit of the Right to Counsel law and to our missions as legal service providers. Such antithetical incentives undermine this essential program.

In a world where not every eligible tenant will obtain legal representation, RTC providers' ability to be compensated for brief legal assistance is an invaluable part of preventing homelessness. For community-based legal service providers, providing brief legal assistance to their neighborhoods is a fundamental part of their mission. In contrast, the new contract’s elimination of partial payment for these cases and a shift to all those cases being handled by one provider via a telephone hotline means that every neighborhood referral forces the community provider to choose between providing services for “free” with limited resources and operating contrary to its mission by turning away the vulnerable tenants.

We urge the City to fund brief legal assistance, as it has under previous contracts. This change would allow providers to triage cases at intake and to provide legal advice to the community in accordance with our missions.

Recommendation

The City must fund providers for all active and litigated cases, even those that take a year or more to resolve. The City must also sufficiently fund brief services and advice work to reflect the realities of RTC practice on the ground, particularly for community-based RTC providers.

(3) OCJ Should Streamline and Simplify the Onerous Reporting Requirements of the Right to Counsel Contracts

OCJ’s increasingly strict reporting requirements often obstruct the goal of obtaining data that accurately reflects RTC providers’ work. By prioritizing strict adherence to reporting protocols over case management realities, OCJ does not obtain a complete picture of RTC providers’ work,

consumes precious resources with data collection and management, and fails to credit providers for work done where marginally relevant data cannot be obtained. For example, if a provider cannot obtain a tenant's unit number, the case cannot be reported despite the provider dedicating dozens of hours to the case. The resulting obligation to devote increasing resources to reporting data undermines the program's overall effectiveness.

Inaccurate or delayed data not only obscures the true scope of RTC providers' work but also undermines the program's accountability and strategic planning. When RTC providers must divert time and resources toward meeting burdensome reporting requirements, they have less capacity to focus on their clients' urgent legal needs.

Recommendation

OCJ must adopt less burdensome and more flexible reporting practices that align with the operational realities of nonprofit legal services providers, who expend excessive resources attempting to comply with OCJ's changeable yet rigid reporting requirements.

VI. CONCLUSION

As we move through the many stages of NYC's housing crisis, we as providers remain on the frontline of efforts to ensure that the needs of New York's marginalized communities are met. We will continue to make the case for justice and equity, and we urge the City to adopt the recommendations provided throughout this testimony. As our clients undergo this unparalleled crisis, we stand right there beside them. On behalf of Bronx Defenders, Build Up Justice NYC, CAMBA Legal Services, Inc., Housing Conservation Coordinators, Legal Services NYC, Mobilization for Justice, Neighborhood Association for Inter-Cultural Affairs, Inc., Neighborhood Defender Service, Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, and The Legal Aid Society, we thank you for your continued support, and for allowing us to testify today.

If you want to learn more about RTC and the issues discussed in the testimony, we invite you to read the RTC Concept Paper authored by the Legal Services Providers which can be found at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/14Vtdi7vfdw67YbnlUtYq9OkXP9WE55sAx24ZTjbVv38/edit?usp=sharing> and is attached to the version of this testimony submitted on-line.

LEGAL SERVICES PROVIDERS

BRONX DEFENDERS

The Bronx Defenders (“BxD”) is a public defender nonprofit that is radically transforming how people in the Bronx are represented in the legal system, and, in doing so, is transforming the system itself. Our office’s staff of over 450 includes interdisciplinary teams comprised of civil, criminal, immigration, and family defense attorneys, as well as social workers, benefits specialists, legal advocates, parent advocates, investigators, team administrators, and policy, organizing, and community engagement specialists who collaborate to provide holistic advocacy to address the causes and consequences of legal system involvement and push for systemic reform at the local, state, and national level.

Through this integrated, comprehensive, referral-based structure, we have pioneered a groundbreaking, nationally-recognized model of direct services representation we call “holistic defense” that achieves transformative outcomes for the people we represent. Each year, we defend over 20,000 low-income Bronx residents across civil, criminal, immigration, and family legal systems, and reach thousands more through our community intake, youth mentoring, and outreach programs. We take what we learn from the people we represent and communities that we work with and launch innovative programs designed to bring about real and lasting change.

Our Civil Action Practice

The Civil Action Practice provides comprehensive civil legal services to clients and their families by integrating civil representation. Our goal is to actualize the civil right to counsel – including for tenants – and minimize the severe and often unforeseen fallout from housing, criminal, family, and immigration court proceedings and facilitate the seamless reintegration of our clients into the community. Our Civil Action Practice attorneys, social workers and benefits & legal advocates represent clients in every forum in New York City – administrative, state, and federal – to address these problems and assist our clients in overcoming civil legal barriers to housing, eviction, employment, and public benefits, as well as addressing instances of police misconduct, criminal record errors, and civil forfeiture.

CAMBA LEGAL SERVICES

CAMBA Legal Services, Inc. (CLS) is a community-based law practice in Brooklyn and Staten Island that provides free civil legal assistance to low-income New York City residents. Our mission as a dedicated and diverse staff of lawyers and paralegals is to provide our clients with the highest quality of legal representation while standing committed with our communities in the fight for racial, social, and economic justice. CAMBA Legal Services’ Housing Unit provides anti-eviction legal services to tenants, including legal advice and representation in non-payment proceedings, holdovers, HP actions for repairs, HCR overcharge complaints, administrative hearings (NYCHA and HPD), Article 78s and other related proceedings. The CLS Housing Unit has a staff of more than 56 attorneys and paralegals. CLS prides itself on being guided by the following principles: compassionate case handling, decentering the attorney to empower the client, tenacious advocacy, collaborative learning, and a commitment to legal excellence.

LEGAL SERVICES NYC

Legal Services NYC's (LSNYC) is the largest civil legal services provider in the country, with a mission to fight poverty and seek racial, social, and economic justice for low-income New Yorkers. For over 50 years, LSNYC has helped New Yorkers obtain the basic necessities of life, including housing, economic security, family and immigration stability, education, health care, and challenge the systemic injustices that trap people in poverty. At LSNYC, we pride ourselves on our deep community roots, our holistic, trauma-informed approach to advocacy, and our ability to work creatively, strategically, and collaboratively with our clients.

MOBILIZATION FOR JUSTICE

Mobilization for Justice's (MFJ) mission is to achieve justice for all. MFJ prioritizes the needs of people who are low-income, disenfranchised, or have disabilities as they struggle to overcome the effects of social injustice and systemic racism. We provide the highest-quality free, direct civil legal assistance, conduct community education and build partnerships, engage in policy advocacy, and bring impact litigation. MFJ has a staff of more than 150 attorneys, paralegals, social workers, and support staff. It is a diverse, unionized, and collegial workplace where staff share the organization's mission to achieve social justice.

MFJ's housing practice is honored to engage in Right to Counsel work in the Bronx and Manhattan, where we deploy a wide array of litigation and advocacy strategies to prevent eviction and to protect tenants' rights.

NEW YORK LEGAL ASSISTANCE GROUP

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 injustice. 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. Our Tenants' Rights Unit (TRU) fights for housing justice: fair, safe, and affordable housing for adults and families so that they can stay in their communities and thrive.

NORTHERN MANHATTAN IMPROVEMENT CORPORATION

Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation (NMIC) is a community-based settlement house and not-for-profit organization founded in 1979. NMIC is a leading multi-service agency with over 140 staff members serving New York City, with a focus on residents of upper Manhattan and the Bronx. Our mission is to serve as a catalyst for positive change in the lives of the people in our communities on their paths to secure and prosperous futures. Integration is the cornerstone of NMIC's programs, and our staff can identify and address a broad array of immediate needs through comprehensive crisis intervention services. Clients may then move seamlessly to capacity building services through our holistic programs designed to transition individuals and families to safer, healthier, and more stable futures.

NMIC's Legal, Organizing, and Advocacy (LOA) unit meets community members' basic needs including legal representation, immigration assistance, housing advocacy and tenant organizing, eviction-defense representation, financial-planning and tax preparation services, services for

survivors of domestic violence, and health and mental health related programming. NMIC serves about 14,000 clients each year across the LOA programs and its Education and Career Services unit.

NMIC's advocacy for the housing rights of its community began with the founding of the organization, nearly 45 years ago. NMIC's representation of tenants in New York City housing courts reaches back decades and it is an original RTC provider, since the program's inception.

THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY

The Legal Aid Society (LAS), the nation's oldest and largest not-for-profit legal services organization, was founded in 1876 to provide free legal representation to marginalized New York City families and individuals. The Legal Aid Society's legal program operates three major practices – Civil, Criminal, and Juvenile Rights – and through a network of borough, neighborhood, and courthouse offices provides comprehensive legal services in all five boroughs of New York City for clients who cannot afford to pay for private counsel. Each year, LAS handles more than 250,000 cases and legal matters for clients, taking on more cases for more clients than any other legal services organization in the United States.

Our Civil Practice works to improve the lives of low-income New Yorkers by helping vulnerable families and individuals to obtain and maintain the necessities of life - housing, health care, food and self-sufficiency. We serve as a “one-stop” legal resource for clients with a broad variety of legal problems, ranging, among others, from government benefits and access to health care, to immigration and domestic violence. Our depth and breadth of experience is unmatched in the legal profession and gives the Society a unique capacity to go beyond any one individual case to create more equitable outcomes for individuals, and broader, more powerful systemic change at a societal level.

Our work has always taken an explicit racial and social equity lens, and the current housing crisis has further focused our efforts to advocate for the needs of New York's marginalized communities.



Making New York a better place to age

**New York City Council
Committee on Housing and Buildings
Chair Sanchez
March 24th 2026
Preliminary Budget Hearing**

My name is Frank McMullin and I am the Communications Manager at LiveOn NY. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

LiveOn NY's members include more than 110 community-based nonprofits that provide core services under the NYC Aging portfolio and many other home and community based services in our city. I have submitted our [housing needs report](#) alongside this testimony for your review.

Background

The affordability crisis is crushing older New Yorkers. Homelessness among older New Yorkers is growing at 3x the rate of any other demographic, and waitlists stretch over six years long.

The senior housing crisis is multilayered: one, the older adult homelessness crisis demands new housing; and two, older adults who are already in affordable units are either watching their rents rapidly outpace their income – often only a Social Security stipend – or are watching the buildings they live in fall into greater disrepair, making injuries more likely and condemnation inevitable.

The funding we need to confront this crisis is miniscule in comparison to the billions in homelessness prevention and mitigation that we will have to pay if we fail to provide adequate senior housing. Study after study has found that funding senior housing programs like SARA and SCRIE do more than just providing older New Yorkers with the dignified life we deserve: they also make intuitive fiscal sense for our city.

The path forward is clear. We have an opportunity to deliver policies that make fiscal sense and address the affordability crisis at the scale it requires. These are policies supported by older tenants, by frontline providers, and by developers alike. By providing proven programs with the funding necessary, we can build a New York where we can all age in dignity.

Recommendations

- **Develop 1000 SARA units per year**, with priority given to 1-bedroom units without sacrificing unit count. The older adult homelessness crisis will only continue to grow, and the six-and-a-half-year waitlist that older New Yorkers currently face is leaving all of us at risk as we



Making New York a better place to age

age faster than ever. We are currently on track to clear today's waitlist, at its most conservative estimates, in 250 years.

- **Commit \$250 million to fully fund the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE).** A rent freeze may provide temporary relief, but the only way to make rents truly affordable for older New Yorkers in need is to fund SCRIE, ensuring that rents remain frozen for older New Yorkers whose incomes tend to remain flat as they age.
- **Commit \$200 million to HUD202 residences across NYC.** A lack of federal funds for HUD202 buildings mean that many are falling into disrepair and are at risk of condemnation. The nonprofits managing these buildings operate at margins too thin to maintain the necessary upkeep. The most cost-effective way to avoid the expensive work of rehousing HUD202 tenants is to invest the funds necessary to bring HUD202 buildings up to code to allow residents to age in dignity.
- **Support innovative, data-backed programs that meet the housing crisis.** Providers across New York City are investing in programs that save city and state dollars while providing the community and care that we deserve as we age. Programs like Selfhelp's SHSAM program, which has been proven to drastically reduce emergency care expenditures, and India Home's co-living program, must be recognized by law and funded to let us all age in dignity.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

For questions, please email Frank Shintaro McMullin, Communications Manager at fmcnullin@liveon-ny.org.

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

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

Neighborhood Housing Services of Brooklyn CDC, Inc.

City Council Hearing

Tuesday March 24, 2026

In the landscape of New York City's housing crisis, small residential buildings (1-4 units) are frequently overlooked yet they are indispensable. In Brooklyn, these properties form the architectural and social fabric of neighborhoods providing a significant part of the borough's unsubsidized affordable housing. These buildings are not owned by corporations. They are owned by families. Many of these families have held their property for generations. Many are Low- to Moderate-Income individuals who rely on rental income not to build empires, but to maintain stability, pay taxes, and preserve the homes that anchor their communities.

And yet, these small property owners are often left to navigate a complex and unforgiving housing landscape alone.

NHS Brooklyn saw the need to assist this population by creating an Affordable Property Management program. This program was built on the foundational understanding that stabilizing these small landlords is the most effective community centered strategy for preventing displacement, preserving affordable housing, and closing the racial wealth gap. It was created to move beyond crisis responses to offer a proactive, holistic mode for sustainable ownership.

This Property Management program helped a single mother and landlord in Brooklyn how to manage her property's finance. She was enrolled in a program where she learned how to make small repairs around the house which helped to save her money. Through this program she became eligible to receive a grant to hire a contractor to completely repair her bathroom that had been an ongoing problem for her family.

Our organizations would like to affirm that small homes matter. That small landlords matter. That the families who have kept Brooklyn's neighborhoods vibrant for generations deserve support, not neglect. Programs like NHS NYC's Affordable Property Management initiative and NHS Brooklyn Property Management Program are essential tools in the fight for housing stability, racial equity, and community preservation.

We are requesting the City Council to continue to invest in these owners, uplift these buildings, and protect the affordability that keeps Brooklyn's heart beating.



March 24, 2026

**Testimony to New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings
RE: Neighborhood Housing Services of Queens (NHSQ) on FY27 Preliminary Budget**

Good afternoon Chair Sanchez and Members of the Committee on Housing and Buildings. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Yoselin Genao-Estrella, and I am the Executive Director of Neighborhood Housing Services of Queens (NHSQ). I am joined by several colleagues and longtime partners in community-based housing services.

For more than 30 years, NHS of Queens has stood alongside Queens residents—both tenants and homeowners—helping them hold onto something that is increasingly fragile in this city: housing stability. We have walked their blocks, answered their calls, and seen firsthand what it takes to keep neighbors in their homes.

And I want to be clear: supporting low- to moderate-income tenants and supporting low- to moderate-income homeowners are not mutually exclusive. They are deeply interconnected. When we stabilize homeowners, we preserve naturally occurring affordable housing. When we support tenants, we prevent displacement and create pathways to long-term stability and, for many, future homeownership.

Today, we are asking the City Council to take important action.

First, we are calling for a \$1 million investment to launch a citywide pilot Property Management Program for small homeowners. This is not a future need – it is a present and growing crisis that needs your attention now.

Every day, we meet homeowners who are doing everything they can to hold on. We meet older adults who have lived in their homes for decades and want nothing more than to age in place with dignity. We meet homeowners with disabilities who physically cannot keep up with the demands of maintaining their property. We meet working families stretched thin – not because they are irresponsible, but because the cost and burden of basic upkeep have become too much.

What stands between them and stability are often everyday challenges that stack up – uncleared snow after a blizzard, unmaintained properties after a difficult financial season. These are not small issues. They trigger violations, fines, and mounting pressure that can quickly spiral into foreclosure or forced sale.

That is why the Property Management Program is critical. But it cannot stand alone.

We must also invest in the full continuum of housing stabilization services that prevent displacement before it happens:



- **Foreclosure Prevention Programs**, which provide critical intervention to keep families in their homes and avoid the devastating loss of generational wealth.
- **Estate Planning and Resolution Initiatives (EPAR)**, which help families resolve title issues and protect intergenerational homeownership—particularly in communities of color where heirs’ property remains a major barrier.
- **Project HELP and emergency repair programs**, which provide essential resources for low- and moderate-income homeowners to address urgent repairs, maintain safe living conditions, and avoid further financial distress.

At NHSQ, we see every day how a single issue – a roof repair, a title complication, or a temporary financial setback – can escalate into a crisis if there is no intervention. With the right support at the right time, these outcomes are preventable.

In its first year, the Property Management pilot will reach at least 30 homeowners, representing approximately 95 housing units. Behind each number is a household that gets to stay – a tenant who is not displaced, a family that remains rooted, and a piece of affordability that is preserved.

NHS of Queens will implement this work alongside trusted community-based partners who know these homeowners and neighborhoods deeply. This is a model rooted in trust, local knowledge, and proven results.

We cannot afford to wait. The pressures facing small homeowners and tenants alike are intensifying. When we lose small homeowners, we lose affordable housing. When we fail to support tenants, we accelerate displacement. When we do both, we strengthen entire communities.

So, we are asking you clearly and directly:

Commit \$1 million to the Property Management pilot program, and continue to invest in foreclosure prevention, estate planning, and emergency repair programs that keep New Yorkers stably housed.

Take a concrete step to prevent displacement before it happens. Help ensure that New Yorkers can remain in the homes and communities they fought so hard to build.

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

Yoselin Genao Estrella

Executive Director

Neighborhood Housing Services of Queens

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www.nhsofqueens.org



Neighbors
Together

New York City Council Housing and Buildings Committee Preliminary Budget Hearing

**Testimony by Neighbors Together
Written by Amy Blumsack, Director of Organizing & Policy**

March 24, 2026

Neighbors Together would like to thank the Chair of the New York City Council Housing and Buildings Committee, Council Member Sanchez, as well as the other committee members and staff for the opportunity to submit testimony.

About Neighbors Together

Neighbors Together is a community based organization located in central Brooklyn. Our organization provides hot meals five days per week in our Community Café, offers a range of one-on-one stabilizing services in our Empowerment Program, and engages members in community organizing, policy advocacy and leadership development in our Community Action Program. We serve approximately 125,000 meals to over 12,000 individuals per year. Over the last five years, the number of meals we serve daily has increased fourfold. Our members come to us from across the five boroughs of New York City, with the majority living in central Brooklyn. Over 80% of our Community Action Program members have a rental assistance voucher, and have experienced homelessness.

Over the last decade, our members increasingly report that homelessness and lack of affordable housing options are their primary concern. In our recent 2025 Community Action Program survey, over 85% of respondents said that housing is the main source of their instability. Our data backs the anecdotal evidence we see and hear from our members daily: an increasing number of our members are either living in shelter with vouchers for years at a time, ineligible for a voucher, or unable to find permanent housing due to rampant source of income discrimination and a vacancy rate of under 1% for affordable housing units in New York City.¹ The intense need for housing that is affordable for low-income and extremely low-income New Yorkers was clearly

¹<https://www.nyc.gov/site/hpd/news/007-24/new-york-city-s-vacancy-rate-reaches-historic-low-1-4-percent-demanding-urgent-action-new#/0>



illustrated by the extremely high number of applications for the Section 8 waitlist. When the waitlist reopened for the first time in nearly fifteen years in 2024, over 633,000 applications were submitted in less than a week.² Of the more than 633,000 applications, only 200,000 were added to the waitlist, and NYCHA is capped at 115,346 active vouchers.

Our Work with Voucher Holders

Neighbors Together has been organizing voucher holders since 2018. We conduct Know Your Rights trainings on how to identify and report source of income (SOI) discrimination, and Housing Search Workshops where voucher holders get additional support in their housing search and assistance with filing source of income discrimination complaints to the City Commission on Human Rights (CCHR) when needed. We work closely with CCHR to ensure that source of income discrimination reports are effective and have the best possible outcomes for our members. We also partner with CCHR on their restorative justice set-aside program³ to ensure that set-aside units obtained through settlements are most likely to go to people in need as efficiently and effectively as possible. Additionally, in partnership with Unlock NYC, we built and launched the Stop Source of Income Discrimination (SID) NYC website,⁴ which provides information about source of income discrimination and how to report it as well as a mechanism for reporting via the website.

We work closely with Unlock NYC⁵ to improve New Yorkers' ability to utilize their vouchers. Starting in 2019 our members worked with the Unlock NYC team to design and test an online tool to help voucher holders easily report source of income discrimination. The tool has enabled hundreds of our members to quickly and easily gather evidence and report source of discrimination to CCHR. In our partnership with Unlock NYC, we have released multiple reports on source of income discrimination and voucher efficacy, including "An Illusion of Choice," the SOI visual online mapping tool, the "Serial Discriminators List"⁶, as well as ongoing budget advocacy to ensure CCHR is adequately funded to enforce against SOI discrimination.

After over a year of collecting data through the Stop SID NYC website, running know your rights trainings and conducting housing searches for people with vouchers, Neighbors Together built a

²<https://nychajournal.nyc/new-nycha-section-8-waitlist-established/#:~:text=In%20total%2C%20NYCHA%20received%20633%2C808,by%20the%20June%2028%20deadline.>

³<https://gothamist.com/news/nyc-requiring-landlords-set-aside-apartments-voucher-tenants-under-new-approach-enforcing-human-rights-law>

⁴ <https://www.stopsidnyc.com/>

⁵ <https://weunlock.nyc/>

⁶ <https://weunlock.nyc/data/>



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grassroots organizing campaign of directly impacted people who had voucher shopping letters but couldn't find housing. The VALUE in Housing (**V**oucher **A**dvocates **L**ifting **U**p **E**quity in **H**ousing) campaign was created by voucher holders for voucher holders, to make vouchers more effective tools for securing housing, and to end source of income discrimination. The campaign's policy platform consisted of 5 reforms aimed at making vouchers effective tools for accessing permanent affordable housing. Since launching in 2019, the VALUE in Housing campaign has won a significant portion of its platform, including:

- Ensuring that CityFHEPS voucher holders receive know-your-rights information about SOI discrimination upon receipt of their shopping letter
- Increasing the size of the Source of Income Unit at CCHR
- Increasing the payment standard of CityFHEPS to fair market rent
- Improving income requirements for CityFHEPS vouchers so that recipients can increase their income until they are financially self-sufficient without fear of losing their voucher.⁷

This year, the VALUE in Housing campaign is fighting to **pass the MOVE Act (Making Opportunity for Voucher Equity)** in the City Council. **The MOVE Act includes 5 bills (Intros 264-269) that will address and disincentivize source of income discrimination.** The bills will:

- Increase fines for bad actors who continue to discriminate and intentionally violate orders from the Commission on Human Rights.
- Increase fines for housing discrimination based on landlord portfolio size, so that penalties for violating New York City's civil and human rights laws will be meaningful to larger landlords.
- Ban credit checks and minimum income requirements for voucher holders seeking apartments.
- Create standards for transparency in tenant screening
- Add source of income discrimination to the Certificate of No Harassment Program
- Publicly list SOI discrimination findings

We look forward to working with the Council to ensure these critical bills are passed, in order to help people exit homelessness and move into stable housing.

Holistic Approach to Ending Homelessness

Over the last decade, Neighbors Together's work with homeless and formerly homeless New Yorkers and voucher holders has made it abundantly clear that the city must take a

⁷ <https://www.stopsidnyc.com/get-involved>



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multi-pronged approach to ending the homelessness crisis. New York City's right to shelter is critical, but it is not enough; the city must invest in eviction prevention through the expansion of CityFHEPS and investment in Right to Counsel, maximize the number of supportive housing units available in NYC, open 2,000 additional new Safe Haven beds, build 60,000 new affordable housing units targeted for homeless and extremely low-income New Yorkers over five years, and increase staffing at key agencies such as the Department of Homeless Services (DHS), the Human Resources Administration (HRA), and the Commission on Human Rights (CCHR).

Full Implementation of CityFHEPS Expansion

Full implementation of CityFHEPS is essential to stemming the homelessness crisis. The growth of the program is evidence that 1) the city is increasingly unaffordable for low-income New Yorkers, and 2) the program is working- it is moving people out of shelter and getting them into stable housing. With the absence of meaningfully funded voucher programs at the state and federal levels, New Yorkers depend upon CityFHEPS for a chance to escape homelessness.

At the end of 2025, median rent for New York City was approximately \$3,500 per month.⁸ In order for that rent to be considered affordable (30% of income), a person would have to be making \$140,000 annually. However, a household of one, working a minimum wage job, or close to minimum wage, making \$39,000 annually, makes too much money to be eligible for CityFHEPS under its current iteration. The gap between the CityFHEPS income eligibility threshold and the amount a person would need to make in order to afford NYC's media rent is massive. Fully expanding CityFHEPS will make people earning up to 50% AMI eligible for the voucher, creating a pathway out of homelessness for thousands who would otherwise be stuck in a kind of homeless purgatory. Removing work hour requirements for those in shelter, as per the 2023 expansion laws, will also help households with variable work hours as well as those who are unable to work but haven't yet qualified for disability.

The CityFHEPS expansion laws would also create a key eviction prevention tool for families on the brink of homelessness. Preventing those households from becoming homeless by offering them a CityFHEPS voucher creates numerous positive outcomes: it stabilizes communities, allows people to stay connected to their networks and support systems, it provides stability and improved educational outcomes for children, and in many cases it helps preserve affordable housing. By using CityFHEPS to keep people in their rent stabilized apartments, the city will save money it would otherwise spend if those households fell into homelessness, entered the shelter system, and then eventually secured a higher rent apartment using a CityFHEPS voucher.

⁸ <https://www.realtor.com/research/nyc-q4-2025/>



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If a dam has multiple leaks, you cannot fix just one and expect the dam to hold. You must fix all the leaks. To address the homelessness crisis, the city can't just help people move out of homelessness with vouchers, it also needs to stem the tide of households falling into homelessness by using CityFHEPS as an eviction prevention tool and by building housing targeted at the lowest income New Yorkers.

Capital Funding for New Units Targeted to Homeless and Extremely Low-Income New Yorkers

More than 100,000 people—approximately 50,000 to 60,000 households—are now sleeping in shelters each night, and hundreds of thousands of the City's lowest income rent households are at risk of homelessness because they are paying more than 50% of their income in rent.

73% of extremely low-income households in the New York City area are severely rent-burdened—making households vulnerable to homelessness because of common and unpredictable events like job loss, or illness in the family.

With a vacancy rate of under 2%, there is a clear and long-standing need for housing that is affordable for homeless and extremely low-income (ELI) New Yorkers. The last few mayoral administrations have touted their “affordable housing” plans, however the majority of the units built in those plans targeted households at area median incomes far higher than what ELI and homeless households make.⁹

Despite record levels of “affordable” housing production in recent years, most of the “affordable” housing created by the City excludes households who are homeless and extremely low-income. New Yorkers who are homeless, and the most severely rent-burdened and at imminent risk of being homeless, are categorically barred from most city-subsidized “affordable” units—not because they earn too much, but because they earn too little. From 2014 to 2024, on average, only 2,000 units a year were financed for extremely low-income and homeless households—four times fewer than higher-income households. In 2024, the largest share of new “affordable” units funded by the City were for households earning six figures. “Trickle down housing policies” will not work in New York City—especially for the city's lowest-income residents.

Addressing the homelessness crisis will take not only income support through rental assistance programs like CityFHEPS, but also a financial commitment by the city to ensure that there are

⁹ <https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/build-from-the-bottom-up/#housing-investment>



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units that are actually affordable for people living in shelter. We join the Homes for NYC coalition in calling for 12,000 units of new housing to be built per year for the next five years, all targeted for ELI and homeless households.

In December 2025, the Council passed new mandates requiring that 30 percent of all new affordable housing production is set aside for ELI households, inclusive of the existing requirement that 15 percent of units are set-aside for homeless households, and an additional 20% must be set aside for very low-income households. (New York City Local Law 66 of 2026.) Now, the City Council must ensure that there is sufficient capital funding to support the production of those units, and that this important mandate does not stall affordable housing production.

New York City must prioritize investing capital in deeply affordable housing—specifically for those who are currently homeless and extremely low-income households at imminent risk of homelessness.

Importance of the City Commission on Human Rights (CCHR)

From early in our work with voucher holders, the City Commission on Human Rights has been one of our most important resources for getting our members housed. Rampant source of income discrimination is a nearly universal experience for voucher holders; the majority of our members with rental assistance vouchers have searched for housing for months and come up empty handed because they experience SOI discrimination with nearly every call.

The Commission on Human Rights is the only city agency that enforces against discrimination on behalf of the individual who was discriminated against. Other agencies can bring litigation against discriminators, but the penalties don't go to the person who experienced the discrimination. CCHR is the primary means by which voucher holders can receive restitution. This restitution can take different forms; monetary compensation for damages, access to view an apartment or access to an application, or an apartment itself.

One of the practices of CCHR that has been most beneficial for our members is the pre-complaint intervention (PCI). If a voucher holder submits a complaint of SOI discrimination and there is enough evidence to support that claim, then the SOI Unit will intervene by reaching out to the landlord or broker to inform them about SOI discrimination and the city's human rights laws. This is often enough to make the landlord or broker reconsider, and our members often get



housed as a result. PCI's are one of the fastest ways our members can secure housing with their voucher.

Another important tool that CCHR uses to help voucher holders secure housing after being discriminated against is their set-aside program. When negotiating settlements with landlords who discriminated against voucher holders, the Commission frequently negotiates for set aside units that will be held explicitly for voucher holders.

Litigation is another important tool, and when CCHR is adequately staffed, in addition to pursuing litigation on behalf of voucher holders, it can pursue impact litigation. In fiscal year 2024, CCHR added additional staff lines, and with increased capacity they were then able to bring impact litigation against Parkchester Preservation Management. The litigation resulted in a historic settlement of \$1 million dollars with 850 units mandated to be set-aside for voucher holders.¹⁰ Neighbors Together members feel strongly that the civil penalties for discriminators should be increased. For corporate landlords, small civil penalties are just the cost of doing business - our members want the financial consequences for discrimination to be meaningful. Members want to see more impact litigation like the recent Parkchester settlement - they want bad actors punished and a clear message sent to others in the industry that discrimination won't be tolerated.

It is important to note that although members of Neighbors Together frequently want to focus on securing safe and stable housing before they pursue litigation, they still feel that formal litigation is important, including both litigation on behalf of an individual and impact litigation. For many, the stability of housing gives them the mental and emotional bandwidth to consider or follow through on bringing litigation against a discriminating party.

When adequately staffed, the SOI Unit at CCHR is a life raft for voucher holders who are drowning in the unforgiving and inequitable sea of New York City housing. For that reason, **it is critical that the FY27 budget increase CCHR's budget to \$25 million.**

Increased Capacity Improves CCHR Outcomes

Discrimination doesn't happen in silos - it is intersectional, and occurs in many different forms. SOI discrimination often overlaps with, or is a stand-in for, discrimination against other protected

¹⁰
<https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/653-24/mayor-adams-largest-civil-rights-settlement-city-history-protecting-new-yorkers-from#:~:text=Parkchester%20Preservation%20Management%20required%20housing,to%20qualify%20for%20a%20unit.>



Neighbors Together

classes such as race, disability, gender, or presence of children, to name a few. With a robust and ever-growing City Human Rights Law to enforce, CCHR has a serious and large mandate. The Commission is tasked with protecting the rights of over 8 million people with less than 1% of the city's total budget.

After many years of advocating for increased funding for CCHR to bring on new staff to the SOI Unit and the Law Enforcement Bureau, Neighbors Together has been happy to see improved response times, and an increase in successful PCIs as CCHR has hired up. That said, the Commission needs increased funding support to continue its trajectory toward improved outcomes. Increased funding for CCHR to continue to bring on new staff, including critical support staff, as well as funding for OTPS, will help the Commission to meet its mandate. While Commission response times to inquiries have improved, Neighbors Together members have waited months at a time to hear back from staff at CCHR regarding formal complaints, and many have experienced their cases taking years to resolve.

Equally as important as funding increases is the Commission's ability to effectively utilize its funding and staff lines. Under previous administrations, austerity budgets, multiple rounds of PEGS, hiring freezes, and the 2:1 allotment process have made it difficult for CCHR to quickly and effectively staff up. Additionally, the city salaries for attorney positions are not competitive with the market, making the positions less attractive to potential applicants. This is compounded by only hiring at the lowest end of a given position's salary range, and the extreme amount of time it takes for conditional employment offers to be made official. The Commission must be permitted to hire all budgeted staff lines immediately and be exempted from the 2:1 allotment process, which requires that two people leave in order to bring on one new hire. The 2:1 hiring policy is counterproductive and illogical- it punishes CCHR for retaining staff, and it means CCHR will always be running below full capacity. OMB must expedite approval of all conditional hires at CCHR in order for the Commission to effectively fulfill its mandate.

The City Commission on Human Rights has a mandate to cover the more than 8 million people who live in New York City. Given the current federal administration's dismantling of federal agencies and civil rights, and the Commission's ever-expanding scope of work, meaningful investment in the Commission is needed now more than ever. **In order to effectively enforce the human rights law, and in order to make vouchers more effective, the city must fund CCHR at \$25 million dollars total and bring the Commission back up to its pre-pandemic levels, adjusted for inflation.**



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Commission on Human Rights Recommendations

The City Council must stand firm in its support for the City Commission on Human Rights, and champion increased funding for CCHR to effectively do its job. To that end, Neighbors Together strongly recommends that the Council:

- **Fund CCHR at \$25 million dollars total, including:**
 - Increased funding for additional staff lines; both attorneys and other critical support staff positions
 - Increased funding for OTPS so that CCHR is able to run robust public education and outreach campaigns. This will allow CCHR to meet people who might otherwise be scared to report discrimination, in their own neighborhoods and among trusted partners, where they will be more comfortable.
- The city must classify staff positions at CCHR as “critical” positions and exempt them from any hiring freezes and 2:1 allotment process.
- The Commission, whose budget is less than 1% of the total city budget, should be exempted from PEGS.
- Salaries at the Commission need to be raised to competitive rates in order to attract and retain experienced attorneys, and CCHR must be allowed to hire at the top end of position salary ranges.
- Create a team within the Law Enforcement Bureau to resolve cases older than 18 months old, within one year.
- Implement the following changes in the first year of the Mamdani administration:
 - Resolve eligible cases through early intervention within two weeks.
 - Appoint a Deputy Commissioner of Adjudications with appropriate staff in the Office of the Chair.
 - Establish an Affirmative Litigation Team.
 - Authorize CCHR to Appear in Court.
 - Ensure the Office of Policy Counsel is adequately staffed.
 - Create an OATH Division specifically for CCHR cases.



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Increasing Staff Capacity at Key Agencies

In addition to increased funding for CCHR, **the city must address deep staffing shortages in the Department of Homeless Services and the Human Resources Administration, as well as Homebase, all of which administer or process CityFHEPS vouchers.** DHS, HRA and Homebase's serious lack of capacity to meet the need of voucher holders affects voucher holders' ability to secure housing. It also affects CCHR's ability to effectively settle negotiations and close out cases in a timely manner. Lack of communication, slow response times, and delays in processing voucher packets can draw out the timeline for securing housing and jeopardize a voucher holder's chance to exit homelessness.

Since approximately the end of 2025, early 2026, Neighbors Together's housing specialists report that around 35% of their members working with Homebase are being told to return to Homebase for a shopping letter after they've found an apartment. This jeopardizes members' ability to secure housing because shopping letters are typically the first thing that brokers and landlords ask to see when working with a prospective tenant with a voucher. If the broker then has to wait multiple extra days for the member to get proof of their voucher via the shopping letter, they are extremely likely to offer the apartment to a tenant who is ready to move forward. Additionally, lack of shopping letters also hold up CCHR's ability to move forward with pre-complaint interventions, a time-sensitive tool that CCHR uses to help house voucher holders.

To offer another example of the serious consequences of delays in processing due to staffing shortages at DHS and HRA: A member of Neighbors Together with a CityFHEPS voucher secured housing through a CCHR set-aside unit, but it took the HRA over a year to process and renew his voucher packet. He lost the unit because of the delays, and remains homeless to this day. To prevent other voucher holders from experiencing the same unnecessary fate, the city must:

- **Increase Staffing in CityFHEPS Units at DHS and HRA**
- **Improve CityFHEPS application processes to ensure the efficient administration and lease-up of vouchers.**
- **Increase Staffing at Homebase Offices**
- **Allow other community-based organizations to submit CityFHEPS applications to help increase processing capacity of Homebase and improve turnaround times for CityFHEPS applications**



Neighbors
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Conclusion

In order to address the historic homelessness and housing crisis in New York City, Council must stand strong in their support of a robust social safety net and use a holistic approach to solving the crisis. In particular, **Council must fully expand CityFHEPS as per the 2023 expansion laws, invest in building new units targeted to homeless and extremely low-income New Yorkers, ensure meaningful funding of at least \$25 million for the City Commission on Human Rights and improve hiring practices, and increase staffing at key agencies that process CityFHEPS applications.**

Without a proper investment in this type of multi-pronged approach, New York City will continue to see New Yorkers languish in shelters while more families fall into homelessness each day.

Budgets are moral documents, and the allocation of funds represent the values of our city. If New York City is truly to be an affordable city for all, one that values equity and uplifting its vulnerable groups, then it must affirm those values by investing in and supporting those groups. The historic homelessness crisis that New York City is currently facing requires a bold willingness to invest in our city's systems and its people, and the funding priorities outlined above will provide significant positive outcomes for tens of thousands of New Yorkers for years to come.

For questions regarding this testimony, please contact Amy Blumsack, Director of Organizing & Policy at Neighbors Together, at amy@neighborstogether.org or 929-759-6667.

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

Mar 24, 2026

Good afternoon, Committee Chair and members of the Housing Committee. My name is Melanie Reyes and I am the Housing Organizer at We Stay/Nos Quedamos.

Our organization has received City Council discretionary funding through the citywide Community Land Trust Initiative which has helped catalyze the growth of more than 20 CLTs across the five boroughs in low-income and Black and Brown communities.

We urge the City Council to fund the CLT Initiative at \$3 million for 23 organizations in the FY27 expense budget—up from \$1.5 million for 15 groups in FY26. This urgently needed funding will provide essential support to 19 active CLTs and four citywide organizations.

Nos Quedamos has an innovative model of community ownership rooted in decades of South Bronx organizing, planning, and co-development. Through the South Bronx Land and Community Resource Trust, launched in 2017, we are institutionalizing accountable development, permanent affordability, and resident power. We do this through an emerging Resident Committee to improve quality of life and help raise awareness about issues that affect our community.

We additionally urge the City Council to support the creation of a **\$50 million CLT Fund in the FY27 capital budget**. NQ has secured 450 affordable units across four buildings and aims to expand its permanently stewarded portfolio to approximately 610 units by 2027, a goal that requires more CLT Initiative funding and technical support. Investments would also support tenant organizing and leadership development to prepare residents for structured governance roles.

One of our biggest priorities now at NQ *is* affordable housing preservation. Without immediate intervention, we are at risk of losing the housing and services provided by these organizations, which would have devastating impacts on whole communities. This is what NQ's CLT will fight against: with more city support, our residents *will work to* push for policies and funding that preserve affordable housing in the long-term and improve building conditions.

Enhanced CLT funding in the City's expense and capital budgets will strengthen these essential grassroots institutions. For decades, the South Bronx has demonstrated that community-led planning can reverse disinvestment and restore stability. Our CLT model can ensure that the next era of development in the South Bronx is rooted in preservation, equity, and community control.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

The New York City
Council Committee on
Housing and Buildings

Pierina Ana Sanchez,
Chair, Committee on
Housing and Buildings

March 24, 2026

Note: This testimony
reflects the position of Pratt
Center for Community
Development and not
necessarily Pratt Institute

RE: NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL FISCAL YEAR 2027 PRELIMINARY BUDGET HEARINGS

Thank you Chair Sanchez, and fellow members of the Committee on Housing and Buildings for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget. I am Sylvia Morse, Director of Research and Policy at Pratt Center for Community Development, which conducts research and technical assistance on land use and housing policy in collaboration with community-based organizations including Community Land Trusts (CLTs). We are also a technical assistance provider member of the NYC Community Land Initiative (NYCCLI), an alliance working to expand CLTs and deeply and permanently affordable housing and neighborhood-led development. **We urge City Council to advance its support for permanently affordable, community-controlled land and housing by increasing funding for the citywide Community Land Trust (CLT) Initiative to \$3 million in the FY27 Budget.**

The citywide CLT Initiative, launched in FY2020, has helped spur the development and growth of more than 20 CLTs across the five boroughs that work to create and steward permanently affordable housing, commercial, or community space and advance community-led neighborhood development. A majority of these CLTs now have land or have projects in development, spurred in large part by the City Council's citywide CLT Initiative and its support for community organizing, education, training and technical assistance for CLTs.

We thank the City Council for its vital support and urge you to fund the CLT Initiative at \$3 million for 23 organizations in the FY27 expense budget—up from \$1.5 million for 15 groups in FY26. This urgently needed funding will provide essential support to 19 active CLTs and four citywide organizations providing capacity-building training and tailored legal and technical assistance to CLTs. This is an increase from 13 CLTs and two citywide technical assistance providers in FY26. **Enhanced funding for the Citywide CLT Initiative will enable Pratt Center to expand our data analysis and mapping, community engagement, and research and planning technical assistance services to CLTs across the city.**

While Pratt Center has not previously been funded through the citywide CLT Initiative, we have provided assistance on 2-3 CLT-related projects each year since joining NYCCLI, ranging from smaller research and mapping projects to longer-term community engagement initiatives. This past year, for example, we partnered with ReAL Edgemere CLT to design and facilitate a community engagement to identify priorities for commercial and community spaces on two lots on the CLT, including conducting site analysis (zoning, surrounding land use and infrastructure), analyzing and developing recommendations based on the project financial model and local market analyses, and designing and facilitating neighborhood charrettes, and ultimately will be delivering a final report outlining and visualizing community priorities. In addition to individual technical assistance projects, we develop and provide educational materials and programs on city land use policies, such as City of Yes and land use ballot measures, for CLTs. With funding for TA services, Pratt Center would be able to expand our planning technical assistance to more CLT projects across the city.

We additionally urge the City Council to **support the creation of a \$50 million CLT Fund in the FY27 capital budget.** Mayor Mamdani's campaign platform included the creation of such a Fund, which is essential to enable CLTs to seize opportunities to bring land and housing into permanently affordable community control.

Finally, we echo the calls from NYCCLI and CLTs for **City Council to help address chronic delays in registering discretionary funding contracts**, which hamper the impact of the CLT Initiative's essential funding.

Pratt Center has a long history of researching and advocating for strategies to combat displacement, preserve affordable housing, and give tenants a say in the future of their homes and neighborhoods. Our report on Community Land Trusts, [Gaining Ground](#), identified CLTs as an essential tool for advancing neighborhood affordability and fighting displacement, particularly in

historically low- and moderate-income communities of color. The report identified policy recommendations to scale and sustain CLTs citywide including the three we call for here today: increasing funding for the CLT Initiative, which has been instrumental to CLT's affordability projects; addressing contract delays; and providing funding for CLT acquisitions.

We thank the Council for its support of new strategies to address the urgent housing crisis facing our city, including expanding community-controlled, deeply affordable housing, and thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the Committee on Housing and Buildings.

For more information, contact

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To: Chairperson Sanchez and Members of the Committee on Housing and Buildings

From: Queens Cooperatives & Condominiums Action Network (QCCAN) Project
Forest, Hills, New York 11375

Date: March 26, 2026

Re: City Council Preliminary Budget Hearing on Housing and Buildings (March 24, 2026): A Proposal Seeking Fundings

Good afternoon, Chair and members of the Committee.

On behalf of the **Queens Cooperatives & Condominiums Action Network (QCCAN) Project**, we'd like to express gratitude for the opportunity to submit a written testimony to the **City Council's Preliminary Budget Hearing on Housing and Buildings**. We strongly urge the City Council to support cooperatives and condominiums housing affordability — in relation to **Climate Mobilization Act/Local Law 97 (CMA 2019/Local Law 97) and its compliance**.

We champion climate progress, yet vulnerable populations in Queens – including fixed-income retirees, older adults, people with disabilities, and young families – struggle with unaffordable retrofitting and electrification costs. As a grassroots organization dedicated to housing stability through co-op and condo advocacy, our mission is to share information and engage officials for affordable housing. With growing support from neighboring building partners, we're working together to ease financial strain on middle-class constituents. But we need your help. We need the city council to support the **"Public Mitigation and Safe Harbor for Cooperatives & Condominiums Decarbonization" Proposal to get this done, once and for all— now is the time, the more we delay, the more families will be torn apart.**

The QCCAN Project Proposal

Our proposal moves away from the traditional "grant/subsidy" model. It is not a **gift** or a **handout** but city's procurement of verifiable carbon reduction - a **procurement-Based** model that treats carbon reduction as a professional service provided by co-op and condo communities to the City of New York to provide upfront costs of retrofitting buildings. This ensures that "green" mandates advance but do not lead to the displacement of working-class New Yorkers. Staggered over five years, this plan balances consumer protection with city investment returns, making homeowner affordable.

Specific Budgetary & Policy Asks:

1. **Direct Funding for Carbon Procurement:** We request that the City Council allocate pilot funding for the **QCCAN Project** proposal. This funding should be structured as a **procurement of verifiable carbon reduction**, not a gift. By "purchasing" carbon offsets directly from middle-income buildings, the City provides the liquidity necessary for retrofits while receiving a measurable environmental return.
2. **Consumer Protection through "Safe Harbor" Status:** We ask for the formal establishment of a **Safe Harbor** designation for buildings enrolled. This protects moderate-income homeowners from LL97 financial penalties as long as they are meeting verifiable reduction milestones under our procurement framework.

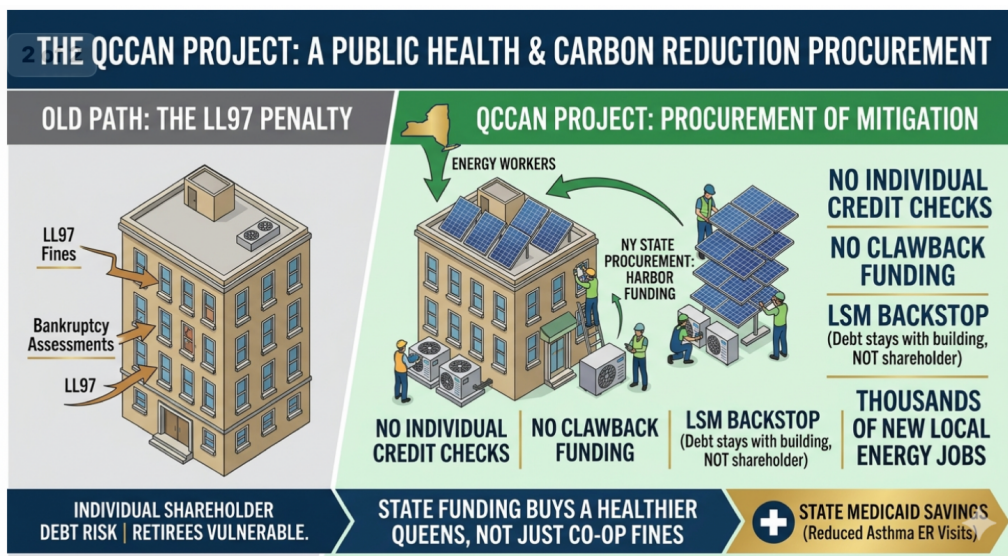
3. **A "No-Clawback" Guarantee:** The City must provide a legislative and budgetary guarantee that funds or credits issued for decarbonization via the QCCAN Project proposal are not subject to future "clawbacks." Homeowners require financial certainty that their investments in green infrastructure will not be undermined by retroactive administrative changes.
4. **Public Mitigation as ROI and Job Creation:** This procurement model serves as a form of Public mitigation, where the Return on Investment (ROI) is found in lower city-wide emission, health cost savings in Medicaid and Medicare, and the creation of new local jobs in the green construction and engineering sectors.
5. **Resource Allocation for Working-Class Housing:** We ask that the Council ensure all LL97-related funding is filtered through a lens that prioritizes the social, humane, justice, economic, democratic stability of working-class homeowners over punitive revenue collection.
6. **Exhibit 2–QCCAN Project: A Public Health and Carbon Reduction Procurement (See below).**

Conclusion

The QCCAN Project offers a pathway to a greener New York without displacing the families who keep our city running. We urge the Committee to shift from a punitive mandate to a **procurement-based partnership** that protects the equity of Queens and the rest of the boroughs' homeowners, creates jobs, provides essential consumer protections, and a healthier New Yorkers.

Respectfully submitted

Queens Cooperatives and Condominiums Action Network (QCCAN) Project
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Graphics from Banana 2



Testimony of Kieran E. Harrington
Chief Executive Officer, RiseBoro Community Partnership

New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings Hearing on the FY 2027
Preliminary Budget March 25, 2026

My name is Kieran E. Harrington. I am Chief Executive Officer of RiseBoro Community Partnership. I would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony on the FY 2027 preliminary budget and the state of affordable housing in New York City.

RiseBoro Community Partnership is a Brooklyn-based nonprofit founded in 1973. For more than five decades, we have worked at the intersection of affordable housing development and comprehensive community services — creating and preserving homes for low-income families, seniors, and New Yorkers transitioning out of homelessness across Bushwick, Ridgewood, and beyond. We have thousands of affordable units completed and thousands more in pre-development, including partnership on the transformative Alafia development in East New York and the adaptive reuse of the JFK Hilton into more than 300 affordable homes.

Beyond housing, RiseBoro operates food pantries, older adult centers, after-school programs, and workforce training initiatives — serving our neighbors at every stage of life. As I wrote in an op-ed published yesterday in Crain's New York Business, (*Op-ed: An escalating threat to affordable housing*, 3.25.26) this moment demands urgency and resolve from every level of government. RiseBoro shares in the sentiments raised in New York Housing Conference's (NYHC) testimony, and we urge this Committee to look seriously upon the challenges that are knocking on the door of all affordable housing operators.

There is one issue I wish to amplify today, the deepening financial distress crisis facing existing affordable buildings.

RiseBoro manages and develops housing in this environment and we see the pressure firsthand: rising insurance premiums, utility costs that outpace rents, and a backlog of one-shot applications sitting at HRA while arrears accumulate and buildings inch toward default. We are thankful to partners like NYHC's whose C.R.I.S.I.S. agenda highlights this issue.

Fifty years ago, when the City was on the brink of bankruptcy it turned to non-profits like mine to stabilize and transform neighborhoods that were suffering from blight and disinvestment, as we saw in Bushwick, where thirty-six buildings taken over by the City were entrusted to our care so that we could rehabilitate not just our buildings but our communities.

Today, we are facing a threat unlike what we've seen in modern times. Insurers increasingly view older affordable housing as high-risk, driving up premiums or withdrawing coverage altogether. Rising insurance costs crowd out maintenance funding, putting additional strain on aging affordable housing. This creates a vicious cycle: insurers cite maintenance risks to justify higher premiums, while new insurance costs divert resources from repairs that would reduce those risks.

The severity of the property insurance crisis facing nonprofit affordable housing is unmatched. In just a few years, RiseBoro's insurance premiums have nearly quadrupled, creating an \$8 million hole in our operating budget. Increases of that scale can destabilize even equity-rich portfolios, limiting our ability to maintain buildings, absorb financial shocks, build new affordable housing or plan for the future.

Insurance is a leading contributor to the financial distress crisis in existing affordable housing and demands immediate intervention. A recent study by Enterprise Community Partners and LISC found that more than half of the 428 projects in their portfolios — totaling over 37,000 units — are operating with negative cash flow.

We are proud of our long history of providing dignified housing for New Yorkers. The investments made years ago, which helped stabilize Bushwick, are now with future investments under significant risk.

The City of New York faces a generational test on housing. RiseBoro is committed to doing our part — building deeply affordable homes, serving the whole person, and partnering with government to expand what is possible in communities that need it most. We ask this Council to meet this moment with the full force of its authority and its moral clarity. The people we serve are counting on you.

Thank you.



March 24, 2026

New York City Council

Committee on Housing and Buildings
Hon. Pierina Ana Sanchez, Chair

Testimony of Jimmy Meagher, LMSW
Senior Policy Director, Safe Horizon

On the Fiscal Year 2027 Preliminary Budget

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Jimmy Meagher, and I am Senior Policy Director at Safe Horizon, the nation's largest non-profit victim assistance organization. Every year, 250,000 people seek safety through our services. Our mission is to stand with those who have experienced violence, abuse, and exploitation. We offer unwavering support and advocate for systemic change. We envision a world where safety is a universal human right.

Whether we are called on to provide expert testimony at an oversight hearing or to assist a constituent in crisis and in need of emergency services, we are proud to partner with the City Council in a collective effort to make our city safer for all. We are here to help you and your staff learn how best to support survivors and connect them to the resources available in your borough and community.

Over many years, the City Council has been a key supporter of our programs helping adult, adolescent, and child victims of violence and abuse. City Council funding fills in gaps where no other financial support exists and allows us to draw down critical dollars from other sources. Moreover, this funding demonstrates the value that you and your colleagues place in helping survivors of all ages access desperately needed shelter, legal assistance, counseling, and wraparound services and supports.

It is a simple fact: **no one is safe without a safe place to sleep**. Stable, secure shelter and housing are the foundations for safety and healing. When survivors don't know where they will rest at night, stability is not just difficult - it's impossible. All New Yorkers deserve access to emergency shelter that offers flexible options to meet their needs and pathways out of homelessness, including deeply affordable housing. By expanding housing programs, streamlining communication between shelter systems, and funding supportive services, we can ensure survivors, youth, and families have the security they need to heal. Safe shelter and housing aren't just basic needs - they are essential for a safer city.

Safe Horizon is a proud member of several coalitions dedicated to ending homelessness in New York City and ensuring that New Yorkers have access to safe, affordable housing. Year after year, housing remains a top priority for clients across **all** of our programs – survivors of domestic violence in our emergency domestic violence (DV) shelters, homeless youth seeking help at our drop-in centers, victims of gun violence who need a NYCHA or Section 8 emergency housing transfer. We echo and amplify the testimony of coalitions like the Family Homelessness Coalition



(FHC) and Homes for NYC. We must do everything in our collective power to end homelessness in our city. It is possible, but it will require bold leadership from both the Administration and the Council.

The Administration must fully implement the 2023 CityFHEPS Reform Package passed by the Council, ensuring that New Yorkers experiencing or at risk of homelessness have access to lifesaving CityFHEPS vouchers. We must ensure that no one is left behind – including survivors of domestic violence residing in HRA DV shelter, Runaway and Homeless Youth, and victims of crime at risk of losing their apartment and seeking a safe new home

Additionally, the Council must ensure that the Administration is centering homeless and extremely low-income families in its affordability agenda. Together, the Council and Administration must invest in the housing resources that have proven effective at shifting the trajectory of family homelessness. This includes:

- Increasing and dedicating capital funding specifically to create units affordable to extremely low-income households. The City must commit to creating 12,000 units of truly affordable housing per year for the next five years - for a total of 60,000 units available only to homeless and extremely low-income households on the brink of homelessness.
- Ensuring that implementation of the state’s Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP) focuses on moving families out of shelter and into housing.
- Increasing and dedicating capital funding for homeless set-aside units and reducing barriers to accessing homeless set-aside units so that New Yorkers experiencing homelessness have a direct pipeline of housing units. We also urge that homeless set-asides are accessible to New Yorkers across shelter systems, rather than only the DHS system. Survivors in the HRA DV shelter system and youth in the DYCD Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) shelter system are equally deserving of access to these units. Our city must stop siloing these systems and pitting unhoused New Yorkers against one another.

Ending homelessness requires a whole-of-government approach. We must collectively meet this moment.



Testimony to the NYC Council Committee on Housing & Buildings
FY27 Preliminary Budget Hearing
March 24, 2026

I am Katie Mui, Policy & Programs Manager at the Supportive Housing Network of New York, a membership organization representing over 200 nonprofits that develop and operate supportive housing across the state. As you know, supportive housing is one of the most effective tools to end homelessness and strengthen communities. However, the model faces mounting challenges as ongoing federal uncertainty, rising costs, and workforce shortages place increasing pressure on our providers.

We thank the Committee on Housing and Buildings for the opportunity to testify today. We are here to discuss the need for targeted investments to preserve the City's existing supportive housing stock, advancing the goal of 1,300 units preserved by 2030 in alignment with the [NYC 15/15 Reallocation Plan](#), which the Council has been in support of. Now it's time to put that plan into action.

We are asking the City to **invest \$44 million in capital funding and \$21.3 million in the expense budget to preserve 325 supportive housing units in FY27**. Our data show that at least 7,623 units are prime for preservation due to their age and precarious rental subsidies and service contracts. All of these units are at least 15 years old and use a combination of federal rental assistance and NYSSHP/HRA SRO support services funding, putting them at significant risk of closure.

Federal cuts to the Continuum of Care are imminent. Despite a Congressional stopgap solution and ongoing litigation, HUD has made very clear that they plan to reduce funding for permanent housing and there are many avenues that they can use to do so. While this disaster may unfold slowly and in phases, it means that nonprofits will lose their **operating** subsidies for thousands of units, which will destabilize programs and displace tenants. By investing in preservation right now, the City can mitigate this loss.

On the **services** side, the units we've identified are currently operating service contracts through NYSSHP/HRA SRO Support Services. This is the lowest funded service contract in existence. While the Network was successful in securing a \$17.8 million increase in last year's State budget, this still falls far below what is required to adequately address service needs:

- The new NYSSHP/HRA SRO Support Services base rate is \$3,600 per unit, which is still five times lower than NYC 15/15 service contract rate of \$17,500 per unit.
- This year, HRA received \$20.7 million from NYSSHP for the SRO Support Services program. We understand that HRA is still in the process of determining how the funds will be allocated and awards for SRO Support Services contracts have not yet been announced.
- There are 3,227 units of SRO Support Services that are at risk (due to no other source of funding) and are still waiting to hear whether they will receive the enhanced rate of \$6,000 per unit.

Allowing nonprofits to claim NYC 15/15 service contracts will address the significant gap in funding, so that providers can deliver the level of care needed.

The \$44 million in **capital** funding will preserve at least 325 units that are 15 years old or older to complete necessary renovations, meet energy efficiency standards, and offset rising maintenance and operating costs. This will also support the conversion of outdated SROs without private bathrooms or



kitchenettes into modernized studios that are more functional and desirable for formally homeless tenants.

Nonprofits are experiencing enormous financial strain. An analysis of Enterprise's and the National Equity Fund's NYC portfolios shows that 57% of properties have negative cashflow in 2024 (up from 22% in 2017), insurance costs have doubled over the same period, and rent collection has declined across the affordable housing sector. If the City does not address the significant preservation needs, we will have to contend with the reality of programs closing, residences shutting down, and tenants losing their homes. Proactive investment in preservation is crucial to the stability of nonprofits and formerly homeless New Yorkers.

We also fully support the following measures to strengthen the human services workforce:

- Fund the **3% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA)** for City-contracted human services workers and pass **Intro 452, the Human Services Wage Equity Legislation, sponsored by Councilmember Stevens.**
- Raise the **baseline funding for the Peer Behavioral Workforce to \$6 million in FY2027**, a \$1.5 million increase from last fiscal year, to add peers with lived experiences to client-facing teams.

Supportive housing works when the system is fully funded and supported. We are at a critical moment where the sector must work in close partnership with the Council to ensure supportive housing remains a viable solution to the homelessness and housing crises in the city.

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING PRESERVATION



What is Supportive Housing?

- Affordable, permanent housing with voluntary on-site support services
- Helps people break the cycle of homelessness

Supportive Housing Models



Congregate

A building with on-site services; adds affordable units to the housing stock



Scattered site

Relies on scarce, unaffordable units in the private rental market

What is NYC 15/15?

- **2015:** NYC made a commitment to develop 15k total units over 15 years, split evenly between congregate and scattered site.
- **2023:** NYC awarded all congregate units, but only 17% of scattered site units due to challenges of the model. **In response, the Network proposed the NYC 15/15 Reallocation Plan.**
- **2025:** Mayor Adams announced the reallocation plan to develop and preserve 5,850 NYC 15/15 units by 2030.

The Need for Preservation:

The Westbourne, WSFSSH Case Study

Without preservation efforts, the city could **lose existing supportive housing units**. **Insufficient services and operating funding** and **threats to the Continuum of Care** put **aging buildings** at risk.



- Opened in 1987 on the Upper West Side.
- **128 SRO units** with shared bathrooms and kitchens, including **76 supportive housing units**.
- **Support services** funding via NYSSHP/HRA SRO at **\$2,964 per unit** which is **6x lower than the NYC 15/15 service rate** of \$17.5k per unit.
- Several units are **not receiving subsidy** due to **disrepair** in common areas.
- Seeking **preservation funding** for **substantial rehabilitation** and **conversion** to studio apartments, which are more sought after and appropriate for **older adults aging in place**.

Why Every Unit Must Be Preserved

10,134 households eligible for SH (LL3 FY25 report)



844 available SH units (LL135 12/25 report)

There are twelve eligible households for every available supportive housing unit in NYC.

More than **7,600 units in aging buildings** could be in **need of preservation** based on their precarious **rental subsidies** and **service contracts**.

FY2027 Budget Ask



Invest \$44M in Capital and \$21.3M in the Expense Budget to preserve 325 units in FY27



Counts towards the 1,300 unit goal (under NYC 15/15) by the end of CY30

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING NETWORK OF NY

BUDGETARY & LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



BUDGET:

Invest \$44M in Capital and \$21.3M in the Expense Budget to preserve 325 units in FY2027

A total investment of \$65.3M to prevent existing supportive housing units from closure. The units preserved will count towards the preservation goal of 1,300 units under NYC 15/15 by the end of CY2030.

3% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for human services workers

Continue to fund a 3% COLA for City-contracted human services workers. Additionally, support the Human Services Wage Floor Legislation to ensure a living wage.

\$6 million for Peer Behavioral Workforce in FY2027

An additional \$1.5M investment from last year, totaling \$6M in FY27, to enable the peer workforce to expand the services they provide, better support existing behavioral health workers, and better track and improve outcomes.

LEGISLATION:

Intro 0452 – Council Member Althea Stevens

A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to establishing wage requirements for city-contracted human services workers

The proposed legislation would require payment of prevailing wages to human service workers providing human services pursuant to City contracts. Specifically, the proposed bill would require human service providers to pay their human services employees no less than the prevailing wage.





New York City Council

Committee on Housing and Buildings

Preliminary Budget Hearing on March 24, 2026

Good afternoon Chair Sanchez, and members of the Committee.

My name is Gladstone Johnson, and I serve as Executive Director of Bronx Neighborhood Housing Services (Bronx NHS). Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

Today, we stand together in requesting \$1 million from the City Council to launch a citywide pilot Property Management Program. This investment will support small homeowners who are struggling to maintain their properties and keep them in their homes.

Across New York City, and especially in the Bronx, many owners of one- to four-family homes are facing multifaceted challenges. For seniors, homeowners with disabilities, and lower-income homeowners, these challenges can show up as leaking roofs left unrepaired, crumbling steps and walkways that become safety hazards, cluttered and unsafe common areas, unsecured basements, failing boilers, and broken exterior lighting that leaves properties vulnerable.

When these seemingly minor issues are not addressed, they can quickly escalate into housing code violations, pest infestations, unsafe living conditions, and increased insurance costs, all of which put additional strain on families already on the brink.



At the same time, we are seeing older homeowners fall behind on property taxes and water bills, making them vulnerable to tax lien sales, predatory “rescue” schemes, and deed theft. For many, the burden of coordinating repairs, vetting contractors, and staying on top of city requirements is simply too much to manage alone.

This pilot program would provide free property management services to eligible homeowners, helping them keep their homes safe, compliant, and well-maintained. In its first year, the program is expected to assist at least 30 homeowners with an estimated total of 95 units. By offering organized maintenance, monitoring building conditions, and helping owners navigate city rules, we can prevent emergencies like fires, building system failures, and hazardous conditions before they occur.

We urge the Council to invest in this pilot program, empowering trusted community-based organizations like Bronx NHS to deliver these vital services.

Together, we can protect vulnerable residents, preserve affordable homeownership, and stabilize our neighborhoods.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to housing stability in our city.

FY26 City Council Ask



The Center for New York City Neighborhoods helps NYC's low- and moderate-income homeowners achieve financial and physical resiliency. We focus on neighborhoods where mortgage delinquencies are highest and homeowners are vulnerable to financial and climate-related shocks. Since our founding 2008, the Center has received financial support from the City Council to provide foreclosure prevention services, estate planning services to NYC's homeowners and more recently, assistance with home repairs.

Since 2008, the Center has served 31,128 people



60% of our clients are people of color,
with an average household income of **\$38K**

City Council Schedule C Funding Request

Member-Specific Discretionary Requests

\$6.29M for the Foreclosure Prevention Initiative (#176381)

These funds are critically needed to support citywide homeowner stabilization and foreclosure prevention services for thousands of New Yorkers, including loans for senior homeowners, housing mobility consulting, and home maintenance courses.

\$1.2M from the Home Loan Program Initiative (#189408)

Funds will support continuation of HomeFix, a high-demand home repair resource that expands available financing so low-income homeowners can maintain their homes without having to rely on predatory lenders.

\$175,000 from the Community Land Trust Initiative

(#191009) Funds will support the capacity of the Interboro CLT, the city's only community land trust operating in 13 different council districts across all boroughs, to expand permanently affordable homeownership opportunities for NYC families.

\$1M for the Estate Planning and Resolutions Initiative

(#190967) Funds will support a further citywide expansion of the Center's estate planning and Heirs Property services

Our Partners



We work with on-the-ground community partners to help homeowners throughout New York City avoid foreclosure, scams and deed theft, to promote financial stabilization, and help keep New Yorkers in their homes. Please see below for the list of community-based partners:

Housing Counseling

provided by our Network Partners

The Bronx

- Bronx Neighborhood Housing Services

Queens

- Chhaya Community Development Corporation
- Margert Community Corporation
- Neighborhood Housing Services of Jamaica CDC
- Neighborhood Housing Services of Queens CDC

Brooklyn

- Brooklyn Neighborhood Services
- Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation
- Grow Brooklyn
- Housing and Family Services of Greater New York
- IMPACCT Brooklyn
- Neighbors Helping Neighbors
- Neighborhood Housing Services of Brooklyn

Staten Island

- Northfield Community Local Development Corporation
- Neighborhoods for a Sustainable Future

Citywide

- Housing & Family Services of Greater New York
- Mutual Housing Association of New York
- Neighborhood Housing Services of New York City

Legal Services

provided by our Network Partners

The Bronx

- Bronx Legal Services
- The Legal Aid Society

Queens

- JASA: Legal Services for the Elderly in Queens
- The Legal Aid Society
- Queens Legal Services
- Queens Volunteer Lawyer Project

Brooklyn

- Access Justice Brooklyn
- Brooklyn Legal Services
- Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A
- CAMBA
- Grow Brooklyn

Staten Island

- Staten Island Legal Services

Citywide

- City Bar Justice Center
- Mobilization for Justice
- New York Legal Assistance Group



Testimony of

The Legal Aid Society

before the

New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings: New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings on The Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2027, The Preliminary Capital Plan for Fiscal Years 2027-2030 and The Fiscal 2026 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report

March 24, 2026

We recognize and appreciate the chair's continued leadership in examining how the City can more effectively address distressed housing conditions while preserving affordability, housing stability, and preventing tenant displacement. We submit this testimony in response to the Committee's oversight and budget hearing for fiscal year 2027 for NYC Housing Preservation & Development and the Department of Buildings.

ABOUT THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY'S HOUSING JUSTICE UNIT-GROUP ADVOCACY PRACTICE

The Society's Group Advocacy Practice represents tenant associations and resident groups in multifamily buildings experiencing systemic distress, discrimination, or harassment. We frequently encounter buildings in serious physical and/or financial deterioration, where ownership lacks the capacity or willingness to stabilize operations and conditions continue to decline despite ongoing tenant efforts. Many of our clients have been displaced from their homes due to vacate orders that have been issued by the New York City Department of Housing Development and Preservation (HPD) and/or Department of Buildings (DOB) after the agencies have determined that the properties pose an immediate danger to life health and safety.

The Housing Justice Unit-Group Advocacy (HJU-GA) frequently works with HPD and DOB towards the shared goals of preserving safe, decent, affordable housing and preventing harassment and displacement. Improving the ways HPD and DOB address vacate orders, code enforcement, and buildings in serious financial and/or physical distress is of critical



importance to the tenants and buildings we work with every day. The City can and must do better for tenants by ensuring that its programs meaningfully and timely address building conditions before they deteriorate, causing the displacement of low-income tenants and the destabilization of communities throughout the five boroughs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Vacate Buildings/Orders

When vacate orders are rendered, tenants must leave their apartments immediately and they are displaced indefinitely from their homes. Often, tenants are unable to return to their homes to retrieve essential documents, medications, clothing, and personal property. While the tenants are displaced, we often see unscrupulous landlords use vacate orders to circumvent the rent stabilizations laws.

150 Bay 22nd Street and 475 43rd Street, both six-unit rent stabilized apartment buildings in Brooklyn, stand as a prime example of the importance of having systems in place to help tenants navigate the vacate order process and highlights the need to have City and State agencies coordinate their programs and services.

After DOB issued a vacate order in November 2023, the owner of 150 Bay 22nd Street applied to DOB for demolition permits. At the same time, the owner refused to provide tenants with access to retrieve essential items and also failed to obtain prior approval for the demolition from the New York State Division of Housing Community and Renewal (“DHCR”), as mandated by the Rent Stabilization Laws and Code, or get a Certificate of No Harassment (“CONH”) from the HPD (the building is part of the CNOH program). The Legal Aid Society had to file a case in Supreme Court to prevent the owner from demolishing the building as well as file an HP case to force the owner of the building to take the necessary steps to temporarily lift the vacate order so that the tenants could access and retrieve their belongings. It took more than six months for the tenants to gain access to their apartments. During that time, the property was unprotected and had not been winterized, leading to pipes bursting and extensive water leaks. The tenants’ personal property was damaged beyond repair.



The experience of the longtime tenants at 475 43rd Street underscores the importance of having DOB and DHCR coordinate with each other. The DOB issued a vacate order in November 2021 and the tenants were not restored to their homes until March 2024, more than two years later. During the time the tenants were out of possession, the owner applied to DOB for alteration permits, which were issued. However, the owner did not apply for or get approval from DHCR for the alteration of these rent regulated units. The layouts of the apartments were completely changed, removing and/or relocating entire bedrooms and kitchens, reducing kitchens to kitchenettes, and removing windows, making it difficult for the families to return to units that no longer accommodated their needs.

When a vacate order is placed in previously occupied rent regulated buildings, demolition should be prohibited. At a minimum, DOB should not issue permits for demolition or alteration without first receiving proof from the owner that a Certificate of No Harassment was issued (where applicable) and proof of an order from DHCR authorizing the demolition/alteration, as required by the Rent Stabilizations Laws and Code.

We are encouraged to see the Mayor's Office establish the Back Home Unit, which aims to support tenants who have been displaced from their homes. It is our hope that DOB and HPD create an ombudsman that will work with the Back Home Unit to shepherd tenants through the vacate order process, connecting them with social and legal service providers; and working directly with tenants to safely and expeditiously retrieve their belongings from vacated buildings without having to wait for the landlord to provide access; and providing safe and suitable temporary housing similar to the units they were displaced from.

We need Local Law 109 of 2025, which designates an office or agency responsible for assisting residents displaced by an emergency, implemented so that tenants receive the resources and support they need while displaced. HPD should offer suitable temporary relocation apartments for tenants subject to long-term vacate orders, not just a shelter stay for a few days. Moreover, HPD and DOB should begin the process of evaluating aged open vacate orders to ascertain the status of displaced tenants. To that end, HPD should partner with other City agencies to address the recurring occurrences of landlord negligence causing fires and other bases for vacate orders. Displaced tenants should be kept abreast of the status of repairs and proposed timelines to lift the vacate order.



To date, the tenants at 150 Bay 22nd Street remain displaced from their homes. Similarly, Bronx tenants at 1420 Noble Avenue, displaced since a fire in their building in June of 2023, and the tenants of 2910 Wallace Avenue, displaced since a fire in their building in January 2025, all remain out of possession. Despite extensive litigation in Bronx Housing Court, their landlord, Ved Parkash, has not made meaningful repairs and has sought to evade accountability at every turn. All could have benefited from the resources and agency coordination that we hope the Back Home Unit plans to provide.

Code Enforcement

Meaningful enforcement of the building and housing maintenance codes as well as other housing standards, is essential to preserving safe, affordable housing in New York City. Due to inadequate enforcement, the burden has shifted to tenants to enforce the city's housing, building, fire, environmental and health codes that have been established to ensure safe and healthy homes for renters. Tenants should not have to litigate to force their landlords to comply with these legal and contractual obligations.

HPD must internally investigate the troubling pattern of tenant complaints closed without inspection, especially when it comes to building-wide heat and hot water complaints. Our clients in Flatbush, Brooklyn experienced this firsthand during this winter's brutal cold snaps. The tenants filed over sixty-five heat and hot water complaints, but only one violation was placed on the HPD website. The rest of the complaints were closed, many without any inspection, even as the tenants suffered through unacceptably cold temperatures in their homes.

To address this problem, HPD should establish a rapid response team during heat season to inspect these complaints and place violations, and these complaints should be investigated at least three times before confirming corrections. Building-wide complaints and violations should not be resolved based on a phone call to one tenant. Instead, HPD should contact all or most of the complainants. HPD also should expand the heat sensor system and conduct proactive enforcement activity based on that data, which should also be shared with tenants and advocates. Finally, HPD should enforce orders to correct from one heat season to the next instead of filing new cases every heat season, which allows



landlords with a history of non-compliance to escape additional penalties, such as contempt.

HPD should make it easier for tenants to exercise their right to respond to a landlord's self-certification of open violations via the Civ10. Specifically, tenants should be able to respond to a landlord's self-certification of corrections online, by phone, or through the 311 app, and they should be afforded the opportunity to do so in any language included in Local Law 30. Now, tenants can only respond to a landlord's self-certification of a correction via mail. As such, HPD is not hearing from tenants about open violations as often as they should and violations often get cleared when the landlord has done no actual work or insufficient work to correct the condition at issue.

Finally, HPD should improve communication between inspectors and tenants. Specifically, when a complaint is made, tenants should be able to schedule a time for HPD inspections through 311. If there is a scheduling conflict, if the inspector left a note indicating that they had missed a tenant, or if the inspector did not come at all, tenants should be able to easily reschedule their inspection through 311. Unfortunately, many existing code violations go unreported because the system for scheduling inspections is haphazard, making it difficult for tenants to connect with HPD.

Housing Court Reform

The Housing Courts are a venue where much of our code enforcement work takes place, dealing with the most irresponsible landlords who refuse to maintain their buildings. Both HPD and tenants commence HP and 7A cases in the housing courts to compel landlords to comply with the relevant housing, building, and safety codes. Both HPD and tenants struggle to meaningfully enforce the codes and make landlords comply with their legal obligations. The pace of housing court litigation and the lack of urgency that the courts often take when addressing severe or emergency conditions, is a barrier to justice and to code enforcement. The Legal Aid Society urges HPD and DOB to partner with our attorneys and other legal services providers and tenant advocates to address systemic barriers to enforcing housing standards in housing court.



Our Priorities for Code Enforcement in Housing Court Include:

- 1) Establish priority docket for buildings subject to vacate orders, and for other emergency conditions including No Heat emergencies. Establish trial back-up part for emergency cases. Define “priority” by objective triggers:
 - a) DOB/FDNY/HPD vacate order or partial vacate.
 - b) No heat/hot water emergency meeting a threshold (e.g., HPD “Heat Emergency” classification; repeated noncompliance)
 - c) Class C immediately hazardous violations; lead hazards with children; collapsed ceiling/water penetration with electrical risk, etc.
 - d) Require automatic assignment to an “Emergency Conditions Part” with set timelines.
- 2) Establish Office of Court Administration monitoring of motion and trial decisions in emergency cases to ensure timeliness.
- 3) Shorten return dates in priority cases.
- 4) Improve communication, transparency, and coordination between HPD, DOB, legal services providers, tenant advocates, and *pro se* tenants.
 - a) Share 7A reports and scope of work expectations with tenants and their counsel.
 - b) Ensure that DOB appears in cases where it is named as a party and communicates with tenant counsel whether through the Law Department or HPD.
 - c) Single point-of-contact at HPD Litigation and DOB for emergency escalations, with published phone/email and coverage hours.
 - d) Standard referral and escalation form (one-page) that could be used by legal providers, tenant advocates, and *pro se* help desks.
 - e) Set up quarterly meetings between DoB and HPD.
- 5) Pro se-friendly “Emergency Conditions” packet: what evidence to bring, how to request inspections, how to seek access orders, what contempt means, language access built in.
- 6) Court-based coordination: a designated HPD liaison present (in person or remote) during emergency calendars.



- 7) Work with tenant advocates to develop collaborative strategies regarding enforcement, including civil fines, contempt, damages to the tenants, etc.
- 8) Increased collection of civil penalties and fines and using these penalties and fines for repairs and services in the affected buildings.
- 9) Orders to Correct should require:
 - a) scope of work and legally required work standards (not just “abate mold”)
 - b) licensed professionals where needed.
 - c) post-repair verification (re-inspection + photos + affidavit)
 - d) Provision of periodic updates to the court and parties of work progress during the period set for repairs.

HPD’s 7A Unit

Tenants throughout the city live in apartment buildings that are an immediate danger to their life, health or safety due to owner abandonment or neglect. Tenants in these dwellings have a statutory right to commence a 7A proceeding to seek the appointment of an administrator to remedy the underlying conditions causing the immediate danger to the tenants. This valuable right for tenants is often undermined by several factors that only suspend the suffering of tenants despite prevailing in court.

One of the most pressing issues is that HPD does not provide full financial support to 7A administrators, which creates an untenable funding gap given the conditions in these buildings. Further, even when HPD does agree to provide funds to the administrator, it usually takes six months or more for the funds to be distributed. Administrators should be provided with the financial support needed so they can immediately begin addressing the conditions causing danger to the building and to the tenants’ life, health, and safety.

Another concern is the dearth of quality administrators. Tenants who prevail in their 7A proceeding often find themselves in the same precarious situation they were in prior to the appointment of an administrator. We urge HPD to expand the pool of qualified 7A administrators by training not-for-profit organizations who could serve this valuable administrative role.



We also recommend that HPD train administrators and that both HPD and the Administrator provide ongoing communications to tenants in the buildings they manage.

Last, to avoid a repeat of the prior dangerous conditions, HPD should have a role in the oversight and supervision of buildings that leave the 7A program. This supervision should include on-site monitoring to ensure that tenants will not face the same or similar conditions that caused the appointment of an administrator.

To bolster and better support 7A administrators, as well as the policy goal of the 7A statute, we recommend the following:

1. Increased funding for HPD's 7A unit.
2. Grants, loans, and/or other financial support to 7A Administrators should be disbursed immediately upon appointment by the court.
4. HPD should commence more 7As themselves.
5. Increase the number of 7A administrators and provide additional and on-going training for all administrators.
5. Regular communication between the tenants, the 7A administrator, and the 7A unit.
6. When 7A administrators are removed, oversight and supervision of the owner and managing agents who take control of the building.

HDFC Cooperatives and Community Land Trusts

The City can prevent the displacement of low-income tenants while protecting and stabilizing communities throughout the five boroughs by providing additional and enhanced support and resources for coop conversion programs, HDFCs, and CLTs. Tenant participation promotes transparency, improves tenant confidence during building transitions, and lays the foundation for successful operation of the properties. As such, tenants must have meaningful input in ownership transitions, management selection, and redevelopment planning. Clear and enforceable rights and timelines must be established so buildings are able to smoothly and timely transition through each phase of the conversion process.



Tenant participation must be coupled with regular and on-going training on building systems and management, as well as with access to the financial and administrative resources needed to maintain and/or improve the properties. The continued and on-going tenant/shareholder management training, access to affordable low-interest financing, and regular compliance audits after coop or CLT conversion is essential to the long-term success of low-income co-ops and CLTs.

CONCLUSION

We appreciate the Council's continued commitment to improving housing preservation and code enforcement tools. Our concerns focus on improving and expanding the affordable housing stock in NYC and diminishing the negative impact a decaying housing stock has on families, neighborhoods, and communities. Addressing these concerns will further strengthen the City's ability to preserve safe, stable, and affordable housing for vulnerable residents.

We welcome continued collaboration and dialogue to support effective implementation of these important reforms.



About The Legal Aid Society

The Legal Aid Society (“LAS”), the nation’s oldest and largest not for profit legal services organization, is more than a law firm for clients who cannot afford to pay for counsel. It is an indispensable component of the legal, social, and economic fabric of New York City – passionately advocating for low-income individuals and families across a variety of civil, criminal, and juvenile rights matters, while also fighting for legal reform. This dedication to justice for all New Yorkers continues during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Legal Aid Society has performed this role in City, State, and federal courts since 1876. It does so by capitalizing on the diverse expertise, experience, and capabilities of more than 2,400 attorneys, social workers, paralegals, and support and administrative staff. Through a network of borough, neighborhood, and courthouse offices in twenty-six locations in New York City, LAS provides comprehensive legal services in all five boroughs of New York City for clients who cannot afford to pay for private counsel.

LAS’s legal program operates three major practices — Civil, Criminal, and Juvenile Rights — and receives volunteer help from law firms, corporate law departments and expert consultants that are coordinated by LAS’s Pro Bono program. With its annual caseload of more than 200,000 legal matters, The Legal Aid Society takes on more cases for more clients than any other legal services organization in the United States, and it brings a depth and breadth of perspective that is unmatched in the legal profession.

The Legal Aid Society's unique value is its ability to go beyond any one case to create more equitable outcomes for individuals and broader, more powerful systemic change for society as a whole. In addition to the annual caseload of 200,000 individual cases and legal matters, LAS’s law reform representation for clients benefits more than 1.7 million low-income families and individuals in New York City and the landmark rulings in many of these cases have a State-wide and national impact.

The Legal Aid Society is uniquely positioned to speak on issues of law and policy as they relate to homeless New Yorkers and the administration of public benefits. The Legal Aid Society is counsel to the Coalition for the Homeless and for homeless women and men in the *Callahan* and *Eldredge* cases. The Legal Aid Society is also counsel in the *McCain/Boston* litigation in which a final judgment requires the provision of lawful shelter to homeless families. LAS, in collaboration with Hughes Hubbard Reed LLP, settled *Toliver*



v. New York City Department of Social Services on behalf of current and past recipients of CityFHEPS and FHEPS rental subsidies.

SUBJECT: Fund Housing Code Enforcement Agencies and Make Lawbreaking Corporations Pay What They Owe (Make 'Em Pay Campaign)

Good morning Chair and members of the Committee on Housing and Buildings, and thank you for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Zara Nasir, and I'm with The People's Plan. I'm here today to speak about housing enforcement and accountability as part of the *Make 'Em Pay* campaign.

Right now, New York City is owed at least \$1.5 billion in unpaid penalties from large corporations and bad-actor landlords — much of it tied to housing and building violations that impact tenant safety and quality of life.

This represents a major missed opportunity.

At a time when the City is facing a multibillion-dollar budget gap, we are leaving hundreds of millions — potentially more — on the table by failing to fully enforce existing laws and collect what is already owed.

Agencies like HPD and DOB are under-resourced relative to the scale of violations they are expected to oversee. And when enforcement is weak, repeat offenders are able to rack up violations, delay compliance, and avoid paying penalties — all while continuing to operate.

That is both a housing failure and a revenue failure.

That's why we are calling on the Council to invest in enforcement staff, strengthen collections, and implement real consequences for repeat bad actors.

We're calling on the Council to invest \$21 million in enforcement at DOB and CCHR and \$25 million at HPD — alongside \$25 million to modernize HPD systems — to strengthen collections and recover up to \$800 million from delinquent landlords over time.

It also includes making more penalties lienable through property tax bills, increasing penalties for repeat violations, and ensuring coordination across agencies so that landlords cannot hide behind LLC structures or evade accountability.

If we get this right, stronger enforcement in housing can generate substantial revenue over time — while also improving safety and conditions for tenants.

Make 'Em Pay is about a simple principle: New Yorkers follow the rules every day. Landlords and corporations should too.

We should not be cutting services while billions go uncollected.

Thank you.

University Neighborhood Housing Program Inc.

2751 Grand Concourse, Bronx NY 10468

WWW.UNHP.ORG

Testimony of University Neighborhood Housing Program for The NYC Council Budget Hearing

Submitted By:

Jim Buckley, UNHP Executive Director

Brendan Mitchell, UNHP Director of Real Estate and Finance

University Neighborhood Housing Program (UNHP) is an Affordable Housing Developer, Direct Services Provider and Housing Research organization which has been working to address housing and financial instability in the Bronx for over 40 years. Through our experience operating our own 1,216 Unit Portfolio, our work with a number of both for-profit and non-profit housing operators representing over 20,000 Units of housing and the New York Housing Conference which represents an even larger coalition of Housing operators we have identified both major issues threatening NYC's most valuable and at-risk housing stock as well as corresponding solutions to address them. We have outlined these issues and proposed solutions in *our Every Nickel Counts* Campaign and the New York Housing Conference *C.R.I.S.I.S* Agenda, both of which are outlined below.

The *Every Nickel Counts Campaign* calls for:

- An increase in funding for the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Multi-family Water Assistance Program to \$100 million from \$16.25 million, and doubling the amount per unit to \$500. It also reduces the remaining regulatory requirement to 3 years.
- Making the one-year HPD waiver on re-rentals permanent based on the successful marketing of vacant apartments under the waiver to interested income-qualifying households in a compliant and timely manner.
- The revision of NYC's Local Law 11 requirements to preserve the safety of buildings without putting the buildings in financial peril, including adjusting the reinspection schedule for compliant multifamily buildings from every 5 to every 8 years.
- The implementation of a comprehensive strategy to bring insurance costs in affordable housing under control that includes changes in lending, legislative, and judicial processes, coordination efforts by housing agencies to simplify insurance requirements, and provides immediate relief for affordable housing through an insurance subsidy.
- Changes in punitive Con Ed practices around billing and "security deposits" in affordable housing by extending turnaround on payments to a minimum of net 30 days and eliminating shut-off notices for deposit demands and late payments less than 60 days.

- Reform NYC real estate tax policies to incentivize high-density affordable housing and prioritize distressed affordable multifamily buildings in the use of J-51 and Article XI, 420-c programs.
- Create an Affordable Housing Stability Court as proposed by the New York Housing Conference to connect tenants in need with financial assistance and process cases more quickly.

C.R.I.S.I.S. Agenda

Affordable Housing Preservation Coalition priorities for NYC Mayor Mamdani Administration to address operating deficits in affordable housing.

1. **Create \$1b loan workout & reserve replenishment fund** for affordable housing buildings under regulatory agreement with NYC HPD at risk of default.
2. **Raise revenue by allowing vacancies to comply with current AMI rent limits** in 100% income-restricted affordable housing buildings under regulatory agreement with NYC HPD or NYS HCR.
3. **Increase capacity for loan restructuring on a portfolio basis** for preservation finance and asset management at NYC HPD to meet growing preservation needs.
4. **Staff NYC DSS adequately to ensure New Yorkers access and retain affordable housing** by proactively preventing nonpayment evictions; supporting timely homeless set-aside referrals; and efficiently processing of CityFHEPs.
5. **Invest in a municipally-backed affordable housing insurance program** to lower premiums for HPD-financed buildings.
6. **Save money on water bills in affordable housing** by expanding the Multi-family Water Assistance Program to cover all affordable housing by budgeting \$100 million and increasing the per unit discount to \$500 per unit.



**Written Testimony
New York City Council
Committee on Housing and Buildings
Preliminary Budget Hearing
March 24, 2026**

Good afternoon, Chair Sanchez and members of the Committee. My name is Kandra Clark, and I am the Director of Policy at Urban Pathways. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Urban Pathways is a nonprofit homeless services and supportive housing provider serving single adults. Last year, we served over 2,500 unique individuals through a full continuum of services including street outreach, drop-in services, safe havens and stabilization beds, extended-stay residences, and permanent supportive housing in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx. We also offer a wide range of additional programming to meet the needs of the people we serve, including our Total Wellness, Employment, and Advocacy programs. We hold City contracts with DHS, DOHMH, and HRA.

Urban Pathways has worked hard to build strong partnerships with the people we serve. Across 10 of our supportive housing sites, we have established tenant association boards. Each month, boards meet to discuss internal challenges and successes. They work with our Community Organizer to bring projects to fruition and create changes in their building and individual apartments. Through this work, many boards have created good neighbor policies, which emphasize respect for surrounding community, shared responsibility for space, and active participation in neighborhood life. Tenants plan and host activities throughout the year, which include cookouts, movie nights, attendance at sporting events, and much more.

In addition, we host consumer advocacy groups twice per month where tenants learn how government and policy work, discuss current issues, engage in advocacy campaigns, and prepare for speaking with elected officials. Through this group, tenants are provided with information about upcoming rallies, public hearings, and advocacy opportunities, including conferences and panels.

As one of lived experienced advocates, Will Woods, has shared, “Having a stable home gave me the opportunity to be the advocate I am today.” His words reflect the very mission behind Urban Pathways supportive housing programs and services: that when people have housing, they have the chance not just to survive - but to lead, to contribute, and to thrive. Throughout all our groups, we regularly hear of tenants’ challenges exiting supportive housing due to the lack of available affordable housing within their income range. Several tenants have discussed at length

their inability to qualify for housing lotteries as their income range is below the acceptable guidelines. This lack of affordable housing and opportunities to move from supportive housing settings often discourage tenants. In addition, we have tenants in rapid rehousing programs that currently do not qualify for an available voucher. While all our tenants in rapid rehousing apartments are working, they will be unable to afford rent without a voucher. They simply do not earn enough income to afford NYC's high rent costs. To better support tenants' needs Urban Pathways joined the *Homes for NYC Campaign* launched in 2026.

Homes for NYC Campaign:

New York City stands at a breaking point in its housing crisis. More than 100,000 individuals sleep in shelters every night, while hundreds of thousands more are on the brink of homelessness, burdened by rents that are more than half of their income. This is the direct result of policy choices that have failed to meet the needs of those at the lowest end of the income spectrum. **If the City is to reverse the tide of mass homelessness, it must adopt a fundamentally different approach: one that builds from the bottom up.**

At the heart of this crisis is a severe shortage of housing that is truly affordable to extremely low-income households. While New York City has invested heavily in "affordable housing" over the past decade, the majority of these units have been out of reach for those who need them most. Eligibility requirements often exclude households with the lowest incomes, resulting in people experiencing homelessness or extreme rent burden unable to access the very housing intended for them. As a result, the City's shelter system, originally designed as a temporary safety net, has become a long-term housing solution for tens of thousands.

To address this systemic failure, **New York City must commit to a targeted housing mandate centered on those at greatest risk, creating 12,000 units of deeply affordable housing each year for the next five years.** These units must be reserved for individuals who are currently homeless or living in extreme poverty. This level of investment is not only necessary, but long overdue. By focusing resources where the need is greatest, the City can deliver immediate relief to those most at risk and begin to reduce the overwhelming demand on the shelter system. Building new housing alone will not be sufficient. The City must also **invest in preserving its existing affordable housing stock.** Many units that are currently affordable are at risk of deterioration, conversion, or loss due to expiring subsidies. Preservation is not only a cost-saving strategy, it is essential to ensure long-term housing stability for low-income residents.

Additionally, the City must take action to **repair and utilize vacant housing units.** At a time when homelessness is at record levels, it is unacceptable for habitable units to sit empty due to bureaucratic delays, disrepair, or lack of coordination. Bringing these units back online quickly can provide immediate housing opportunities for those in need.

Housing that is initially affordable often becomes inaccessible over time due to rising rents or expiring affordability requirements. The City must **implement safeguards to guarantee that investments made today continue to serve low-income households for decades to come.** This includes stronger regulatory frameworks, sustained funding commitments, and accountability measures to prevent the erosion of affordability.

When deeply affordable units are created, they relieve pressure across the entire housing market. **By stabilizing the lowest-income households, the City can reduce competition for scarce low-cost units, ease rent burdens for similar income groups and create a more equitable housing system overall.** Reducing homelessness leads to significant savings in public resources, including shelter operations, emergency services, and healthcare costs.

Solving mass homelessness is not only a moral necessity but benefits New York City as a whole. The City thrives when everyone has the safety, dignity, and stability of a home. By committing to large-scale investment in deeply affordable housing, preserving existing units, utilizing vacant spaces, and ensuring long-term stability, the City can begin to reverse decades of policy failure. A decisive shift toward building from the bottom up, placing the needs of the most vulnerable at the center of housing policy, offers a clear and achievable path forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We look forward to working with the City Council on a fair and equitable budget for all New Yorkers.

For questions or more information, please contact:

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Gary P. Jenkins, Chief Executive Officer



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

Preliminary Budget Hearing for FY2027

March 24, 2026

Good afternoon. My name is Laura Wolf-Powers and I am a steering committee member of the Western Queens Community Land Trust, which has been receiving City Council discretionary funding since 2022. The election of Mayor Mamdani last fall is a testament to the centrality of affordability and community power as priorities for New Yorkers. Many people at this hearing today are testifying about the role CLTs play in creating and preserving permanently affordable housing. Around the city, groups of residential tenants are working with CLTs to organize their neighbors, improve their buildings, and keep their housing affordable in perpetuity by removing property from the speculative marketplace. CLTs are also involved in new construction through HPD programs like Neighborhood Pillars and Open Door.

What you may not know is that CLTs are also working to preserve and develop non-residential real estate. **While the housing crisis is overwhelming, so too is the crisis for business owners and workers who are facing rising and unsustainable commercial and industrial rents.**

These include working artists, performing arts companies, non-profit youth development, and social services organizations; community-oriented retailers, and many job-creating production businesses. WQCLT has a concrete plan to redevelop the industrial building at 44-36 Vernon Boulevard in Long Island City as affordable work space for small businesses, working artists, and workforce and youth development organizations. Big changes are coming to LIC as a result of the OneLIC rezoning. In addition to new units of affordable housing, we believe that building a city we can afford must include a plan for commercial and industrial renters, too and we are fighting to make this building a community hub, the Queensboro People's Space or QPS.

Funding from the City Council has enabled WQCLT to have a full-time organizer and coordinator, the amazing Pamela Herrera, on staff to shepherd both QPS and our multiple other projects. Because we are running almost exclusively on all volunteer person-power, Pam has been the essential glue needed to keep our growing organization on track. **We urge the City Council to fund the CLT Initiative at \$3 million for 23 organizations in the FY27 expense budget—up from \$1.5 million for 15 groups in FY26.** This urgently needed funding will

provide essential support to 19 active CLTs and four citywide organizations providing capacity-building training and tailored legal and technical assistance to CLTs. We additionally urge the City Council to support the creation of a **\$50 million CLT Fund in the FY27 capital budget**. Mayor Mamdani committed in his campaign platform to the creation of such a Fund, which is essential to enable CLTs to seize opportunities to bring land and housing into permanently affordable community control. **Finally, we urge the City Council to address chronic, harmful delays in registering discretionary funding contracts.** These persistent delays, over multiple years, are creating cash flow challenges for small organizations. As an organization newly on our own after working with a fiscal sponsor for several years, shortening the time between allocation and contract registration is a particular priority for our organization.

Enhanced funding for CLTs in the city's expense and capital budgets will enable groups to build on strong progress and meet the growing demand for CLTs. New policies — including recently enacted land bank legislation and the imminent reform of the city's Third Party Transfer program— stand to channel many more properties to community ownership in the coming years. Enhanced CLT funding in the City's expense and capital budgets will strengthen these essential grassroots institutions and enable them to be a vital part of the affordability ecosystem that Mayor Mamdani is building with Council support.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.



Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness
for Women and their Children

**Testimony of Win (Formerly Women in Need, Inc.) for the New York City Council
Committee on General Welfare Preliminary Budget Hearing
March 24th, 2026**

Thank you, Chair Sanchez, and the esteemed members of the Committee on Housing and Buildings for the opportunity to submit testimony on the Fiscal Year 2027 budget. My name is Jade Vasquez, and I am the Director of Policy and Research at Win, the largest provider of shelter and supportive housing to families with children in New York City and the nation. We operate 16 shelters and nearly 500 supportive housing units across the five boroughs. Each night, nearly 7,000 people call Win “home,” including 3,600 children.

Today, as our city faces its worst affordability crisis, more than 100,000 New Yorkers, including 33,000 children, are experiencing homelessness.¹ The underlying cause of mass homelessness in New York City is a shortage of rental housing for the lowest income residents. This homelessness crisis will continue to grow unless the City corrects the misalignment between the greatest need for affordable housing and the priorities for affordable housing production.

The City must commit to creating 12,000 units of truly affordable housing per year for the next five years—for a total of 60,000 units available only to homeless and extremely low-income households on the brink of homelessness. New York City must prioritize investing capital for deeply affordable housing— specifically for those who are currently homeless and extremely low-income households at imminent risk of homelessness.

Approximately 73% of extremely low-income households in the New York City area are severely rent-burdened— making households vulnerable to homelessness because of any event like job loss, or illness in the family.² Despite record levels of “affordable” housing production in recent years, most of the “affordable” housing created by the City excludes households who are homeless and extremely low-income. New Yorkers who are homeless or severely rent-burdened and at imminent risk of being homeless, are categorically barred from most City-subsidized “affordable” units—not because they earn too much, but because they earn too little.

For example, between 2014 and 2024, New York City financed only 2,000 units per year for extremely low-income and homeless households—four times fewer than higher-income households. In 2024, the largest share of new “affordable” units funded by the City were for households earning six figures.³

All families need a safe and decent place to live where they don’t have to choose between paying rent or being able to put food on the table. If a household’s income is extremely low, or if members of the household are disabled or otherwise unable to work, homelessness should not be the result. It is evident that New York City’s “trickle down housing policies” have not been working for the city’s lowest-income residents. We urge the Mamdani Administration and this



Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness
for Women and their Children

Council to right this wrong and give homeless and extremely low-income New Yorkers more opportunities to access permanent affordable housing. Thank you.

¹ “Facts About Homelessness,” *Coalition For The Homeless*, last updated January 2026,
<https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/facts-about-homelessness/>.

² “The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes,” *National Low Income Housing Coalition*, March 2026,
<https://nlihc.org/gap>.

³ “Build From the Bottom Up: Affordable Housing for Homeless New Yorkers,” *Coalition For The Homeless*,
<https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/build-from-the-bottom-up/>.

Policy Brief: Saving Affordable Co-ops Through a Luxury Housing Tax & Coordinated City-State Action

From: Tamika Mapp, District Leader, 68th Assembly District Part D

To: New York City Council & New York State Legislature

New York City's affordable co-ops—especially HDFCs and Mitchell-Lama conversions—are facing a deepening financial crisis driven by rising costs, expiring supports, and a lack of coordinated policy between the City and State.

I support Resolution 0009-2026 as a step toward protecting these homes. However, to truly stabilize and preserve affordable homeownership, we must pair policy with dedicated, sustainable funding.

That funding should come from a clear and equitable source:

A Luxury Housing Tax on high-value real estate.

This approach ensures that those benefiting most from New York's housing market contribute to preserving affordability for working-class homeowners.

The Problem

1. Affordable Co-ops Are Financially Fragile

HDFCs and similar co-ops operate with:

Limited reserves

Low- to moderate-income shareholders

Aging buildings in need of major repairs

Result:

Rising maintenance fees

Inability to fund critical repairs

Increased risk of displacement

2. Expiring Supports + Rising Costs

Co-ops are being squeezed by:

Expiring tax abatements

Rising property taxes

Increasing insurance and utility costs

Buildings are operating with no margin for repair or stability

3. No Dedicated Funding Stream for Preservation

Unlike other housing programs, affordable co-ops lack:

A permanent capital funding source

Reliable access to city/state repair funds

Without funding, buildings deteriorate and residents are pushed out

Policy Solution: A Luxury Housing Tax for Preservation

What the State Must Do

Enact a Luxury Housing Tax on high-value residential properties and transactions

Target:

Pied-à-terre properties

High-value second homes

Luxury real estate transactions above a defined threshold

Dedicate a portion of revenue to affordable homeownership preservation

What the City Must Do

Support and advocate for the Luxury Housing Tax

Strengthen Resolution 0009-2026 to include funding alignment

Create systems to receive and deploy funds directly to co-ops in need

Policy Recommendations

1. Establish a Luxury Housing Tax

New York State should:

Implement a progressive tax on high-value residential properties

Focus on non-primary residences and luxury transactions

Outcome: Generates new revenue without burdening working families

2. Dedicate Funding to Affordable Co-op Preservation

Allocate:

At least 10% of revenue to a dedicated fund for:

HDFCs

Mitchell-Lama co-ops

HPD-sponsored homeownership

Outcome: Creates a sustainable funding stream for repairs and stabilization

3. Create a City-Administered Co-op Preservation Fund

NYC should:

Administer funds through HPD or a dedicated entity

Prioritize:

Major capital repairs (roofs, boilers, elevators)

Emergency stabilization

Energy efficiency upgrades

Prevents buildings from falling into crisis

4. Stabilize Costs for Homeowners

Use funds to:

Offset major repair costs

Prevent excessive maintenance increases

Eliminate the need for unaffordable assessments

Outcome: Keeps long-term residents in their homes

5. Pair Funding with Strong Protections

Require:

Anti-speculation enforcement

Clear resale and affordability rules

Governance support for co-op boards

Outcome: Protects public investment and resident stability

Equity Impact

Affordable co-ops are essential to:

Black and Latino homeownership in NYC

Working-class wealth building

Community stability in neighborhoods like East Harlem

Without intervention:

Residents will be displaced

Affordable units will be lost

The racial wealth gap will widen

Why This Approach Works

Targets wealth at the top of the housing market

Protects working-class homeowners

Creates a dedicated, ongoing funding stream

Aligns City implementation with State authority

Affordable co-ops are not failing because residents are irresponsible—they are failing because they were never given the financial tools to succeed.

At the same time, luxury real estate continues to thrive.

We must rebalance this system.

A Luxury Housing Tax ensures that the success of the high-end market helps preserve housing for the communities that built this city.

Call to Action

New York City Council must:

Strengthen Resolution 0009-2026

Advocate for a Luxury Housing Tax

Prepare to deploy funds for co-op preservation

New York State Legislature must:

Pass a Luxury Housing Tax

Dedicate funding to affordable co-ops

Partner with NYC to stabilize HDFCs and Mitchell-Lama housing

Tamika Mapp

District Leader, 68th Assembly District Part D

Fighting for Housing Justice, Homeownership, and Community Stability

Letter to Dina Levy (HPD Commissioner)

Madison Plaza Apartment Corp. & Moderate-Income Co-op Owners
East Harlem & New York City

Dina Levy

Commissioner
New York City Department of Housing Preservation & Development (HPD)
100 Gold Street
New York, NY 10038

Date: January 22, 2026

Dear Commissioner Levy,

Our neighbor Ruth is 80 years old and has lived in her East Harlem apartment for 25 years. She's frantic about being forced to leave—and so are we. We are all facing displacement through no fault of our own from the community we have built together.

We are writing as residents at 1787, 1825, and 1831 Madison Avenue in East Harlem, and on behalf of thousands of moderate-income co-op owners across New York City, regarding an urgent housing preservation crisis: the impending expiration of 421-a tax abatements and the resulting escalation of unaffordable property taxes threaten to displace us, and our neighbors from homes we have occupied for decades.

The Crisis: 421-a Tax Cliff & Affordability Collapse

Beginning in 2026 and accelerating through 2030, more than 1,100 limited-equity and income-restricted co-ops and condos across New York City—representing roughly 25,000 households—face the expiration of 421-a tax abatements or the phase-down of earlier regulatory protections. Without immediate intervention, thousands of families, disproportionately Black and Brown residents in neighborhoods like East Harlem, will face sudden, unaffordable property-tax increases that force them out of communities they have helped stabilize for decades.

A Concrete Example: Madison Plaza at 1825 Madison Avenue

Madison Plaza at 1825 Madison Avenue is an 91-unit, 421-a income-restricted co-op in East Harlem that was originally developed in the early 2000s with New York City Housing Development Corporation (HDC) financing and HPD sponsorship under the City's middle-income homeownership programs.[web:44][web:47][web:48] Following a preservation refinance with HPD to address original construction-related costs and stabilize the building's finances—not for profit—Madison Plaza is now regulated solely by HPD and remains an income-restricted, moderate- and middle-income building whose affordability depends on predictable and equitable property-tax treatment.[file:38]

For two decades, Madison Plaza has provided stable homeownership for moderate-income New Yorkers, many of them seniors and longtime East Harlem residents. Without intervention, homeowners at 1825 Madison will see property-tax bills spike from roughly \$164 per shareholder in 2025 to nearly \$12,000 by 2031—a more than 7,217 percent increase in six years.[file:38] For an 80-year-old shareholder who has called this home for over two decades, monthly taxes will rise from roughly \$14 today to more than \$900 within five years.[file:38] This resident represents over one-third of our community: seniors, essential workers, and fixed-income families who simply cannot absorb these increases.

The Context: Systemic Racial Inequity in NYC's Property Tax System

This crisis is not an isolated accident. It reflects documented systemic inequity embedded in New York City's property-tax structure.

On March 31, 2025, the Community Service Society and the Progress and Poverty Institute released *Footing the Bill: Fifty Years of NYC Overtaxing Tenants, Towers, and Low-Income Communities of Color*, revealing that NYC's property-tax system disproportionately burdens:

- **Large multifamily buildings** (including 421-a co-ops and limited-equity properties): effective tax rate ~3.6%
- **One- to three-family homes** (predominantly in white, wealthier neighborhoods): effective tax rate ~0.7%
- **Rental properties**: average effective tax rate ~4.3%
- **Homeowners**: average effective tax rate ~3.0%
- **Properties worth under \$300,000 per unit**: roughly **three times** the effective rate of those worth over \$1 million

Most critically, the report documents that predominantly Black neighborhoods pay higher effective property-tax rates than wealthier, whiter areas (e.g., Park Slope, the East Village).[web:17][web:20][web:23][web:25] This disparity is not incidental—it is the outcome of a

50-year-old assessment system that has systematically undervalued luxury buildings while over-taxing the multifamily, rent-regulated, and income-restricted housing that serves Black and Latino working families.

Madison Plaza—a 421-a cooperative in East Harlem with a majority Black and Latino resident base, housed in a large multifamily building in a historically under-invested community of color—is exactly the property type this system over-taxes.[web:44][web:48][web:23] Layering a 500-plus percent tax increase on top of that inequitable baseline will deepen racial disparities in housing stability rather than reduce them.

HPD's Portfolio at Risk: The Intersection with HPD-Assisted Housing

HPD-assisted buildings and programs form the backbone of affordability in East Harlem and across New York City. Since the 2017 East Harlem rezoning, HPD and its partners have financed more than **7,500 new affordable homes** in the neighborhood, including the Sendero Verde project (~700 passive-house units) and 433-unit all-affordable redevelopments at sites like 1760 Third Avenue.[web:29][web:32][web:34]

However, while HPD invests heavily in rental and supportive housing, moderate-income 421-a co-op owners in East Harlem are increasingly shouldering comparatively high Class 2 effective property-tax rates. The burden falls unevenly on homeowners in limited-equity structures, even though they are pursuing the same HPD mission: permanent affordability for low- to moderate-income New Yorkers of color.

Our Ask: Citywide Preservation Framework

We are asking HPD to lead a citywide preservation response for 421-a and other income-restricted co-ops and condos facing the tax cliff—a strategic extension of HPD's core mission to preserve affordability and advance housing equity.

We propose:

1. **Extend or transition protections** for existing 421-a and limited-equity co-ops and condos that maintain affordability covenants and income restrictions, so current homeowners are not abruptly pushed into tax burdens designed for luxury, market-rate properties.
2. **Create income-scaled tax relief** proportionate to household income and co-op equity restrictions, so tax liability reflects what moderate-income homeowners can reasonably pay and the regulated nature of their housing.
3. **Establish "Age In Place In Dignity" property-tax protections** for seniors and fixed-income owner-occupants in 421-a and other income-restricted co-ops and condos.

Qualifying households would have their property taxes frozen at an affordable baseline, with future increases capped or adjusted based on income. This approach allows longtime residents to remain in their homes without reopening the broader politics of 421-a, while directly addressing the inequities documented by CSS and PPI.[web:20][web:23][web:25][file:38]

4. **Prioritize vulnerable populations**—seniors, people with disabilities, longtime residents—so no one who helped build these communities is forced out by a sudden tax shock.

5. **Develop a multi-agency coordination mechanism** involving HPD, the Department of Finance, DHCR, and key community organizations to track expiration dates, identify at-risk buildings, and deploy a menu of preservation tools (Article XI exemptions, 485-x incentives, regulatory agreement renewals, tax relief) tailored to each building's situation.[web:40][web:41][web:52]

Why This Matters

- **Scale:** Over 25,000 New York City households in 421-a and limited-equity co-ops are at risk if abatements and protections expire without intervention.[file:38]
- **Race & class:** If even a quarter of these households lose their protections, tens of thousands of New Yorkers—disproportionately Black and Brown working families, seniors, and essential workers—could be displaced from communities across all five boroughs—Washington Heights, the Lower East Side, the South Bronx, Sunset Park, Astoria—where HPD and community development efforts have concentrated.[web:17][web:23][web:25][web:24][web:31]

Next Steps

We welcome the opportunity to brief you and your team, share resident-level impact data from Madison Plaza and other 421-a buildings across East Harlem and beyond, and work collaboratively with HPD to develop and pilot a citywide preservation strategy. We are prepared to provide detailed building-level inventories, demographic data, and case studies that will inform HPD's response.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter and for your continued leadership in preserving affordable housing for New Yorkers who need it most.

Sincerely,

Sabrina Lamb

On behalf of constituents:

Madison Plaza, 1825 Madison Avenue

Madison Park, 1831 Madison Avenue

Madison Court, 1787 Madison Avenue



Email: sabrinaatmadisonplaza@gmail.com

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

Preliminary Budget Hearing for FY2027

March 24, 2026

Good afternoon, Committee Chair and members of the Committee on Housing and Buildings, and thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Andrea Mungo and I am a Christian who is actively engaged with my community of Astoria to bring justice and mercy to those who need it. I am also a social worker and have witnessed firsthand the relentless struggle that people I know and care about face in trying to pay rent. My involvement with the Western Queens Community Land Trust comes from my passion to see land and homes developed with and for the people in a just and affordable way.

For the last 4 + years, our organization has received City Council discretionary funding through the citywide **Community Land Trust (CLT) Initiative**. Launched in FY2020, the initiative delivers comprehensive community organizing, education, training and technical assistance to support the formation and expansion of CLTs, as vehicles to create and preserve permanently affordable housing and promote neighborhood-led development.

We urge the City Council to fund the CLT Initiative at \$3 million for 23 organizations in the FY27 expense budget—up from \$1.5 million for 15 groups in FY26. This urgently needed funding will provide essential support to 19 active CLTs and four citywide organizations providing capacity-building training and tailored legal and technical assistance to CLTs.

This year, the Western Queens Community Land Trust will not have a fiscal sponsor which means we will need additional funding to keep our organization running and to grow the org to reach more families throughout western Queens.

Because of City Council funding, we have been able to add to our one full-time staff, a part-time project manager and a bookkeeper/accountant. Without city council funding we wouldn't have been able to hire a designated staffer to spearhead our projects.

AND we are on the cusp of acquiring our first piece of NYC land! The Astoria Food Pantry! We are thrilled to have the opportunity to steward this land and

building and protect it from predatory landlords and offer the current tenants deeply and permanently affordable rent.

We are organizing in Elmhurst to raise awareness of the many abandoned “zombie” buildings and putting pressure on the owners to take action to sell or responsibly develop these buildings.

We've hosted town halls, potlucks, a block party, a sleep out, tabled at countless community events, held our first general meeting in September! We've met with tenant associations, tenant organizers, artists businesses and other Queens organizations to discuss the CLT model and opportunities. We've submitted our RFEI for the DOE building in LIC and await the release of the RFP.

We additionally urge the City Council to support the creation of a **\$50 million CLT Fund in the FY27 capital budget**. This funding will be a game-changer for organizations like ours. For example, we are currently in conversation with a home owner who wants to sell to us! These funds could make this purchase possible.

Finally, we urge the City Council to address chronic, harmful delays in registering discretionary funding contracts. The money needs to get to us faster!

By bringing land and housing into community ownership, CLTs serve as powerful bulwarks against real estate speculation and displacement.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.

Andrea Mungo

Mar 24, 2026

Dear Chair Sanchez, and Members of the Housing and Building's Committee,

My name is Kat Corbell, and I was homeless in NYC for over 8 years. In that time, I was in and out of shelter both private and public, on and off the streets and subways, and staying on multiple couches and spare beds. Thank you for holding this budget hearing on March 24th, 2026, and for allowing me the opportunity to submit testimony.

The City must commit to creating 12,000 units of truly affordable housing per year for the next five years—for a total of 60,000 units available only to homeless and extremely low-income households on the brink of homelessness. New York City must prioritize investing capital specifically for deeply affordable housing—specifically for those who are currently homeless and extremely low-income households at imminent risk of homelessness.

I am writing because I became homeless due to the high cost of housing in the city and my disability. I have, at times, been able to hold down jobs, but jobs are hard to come by and don't pay enough. Even a \$20/hr job wasn't enough to afford a studio apartment in the city, and when minimum wage hadn't reached \$15/hr. Therefore, I couldn't afford market-rate housing then, and I can't afford market-rate housing now. Nor can I afford apartments currently on Housing Connect because the majority of them are too expensive, and I don't qualify for many with only SSI, my current source of income.

Affordable housing was never truly available to me. At one point a housing navigator told me it would take eight years, in her best estimation, for an ELI or homeless person to get an affordable unit. I've had a profile since 2012, going through multiple iterations of the Housing Connect. And I've never been offered a dignified apartment. This isn't an issue of preference—it's a supply issue. If there was enough ELI housing and homeless set-aside units, I would have been offered a dignified apartment long ago.

The underlying cause of mass homelessness in New York City is a shortage of rental housing for the lowest income residents. This homelessness crisis will continue to grow unless the City corrects the misalignment between the greatest need for affordable housing and the priorities for affordable housing production.

We need more capital investment in affordable housing specifically for income-restricted ELI units and homeless set-aside units, as well as units for dv survivors such as those of us who become or re-enter homelessness due to domestic violence and are directed to the inhumane city shelters where we have to start at survival tactics *again* even though we just fought for survival and are told we are at a safe place, even if we have no kids hence told do not qualify for dv placement.

Not for moderate- or middle-income households, nor market-rate subsidies. We need investments for the people who need it most, not for those who have so many options for housing.

Without this investment, more people will enter shelters, and less people will exit. I urge the administration and this Council to right this wrong and give homeless New Yorkers more opportunities to get permanent affordable housing.

Thank you.
Kat Corbell

New York City Committee on Housing and Buildings
Preliminary Budget Hearing
Testimony by Khaliyl Mayes
March 26, 2026

Greetings, and thank you, City Council and members of the Committee on Housing and Buildings, for holding the preliminary hearing. My name is Khaliyl Mayes, and I am a member of Neighbors Together. I am here to share my experience as a CityFHEPS voucher holder, shedding light on the challenges others face when seeking housing with a voucher. Without the CityFHEPS voucher and the City Commission on Human Rights, I would not be able to exercise my rights to live with dignity and access fair housing. Sadly, New York City's source-of-income discrimination laws need stronger enforcement and sufficient funding to ensure that bad actors engaging in source-of-income discrimination are held fully accountable under the law. I also support the passage of **bills 0264 through 0269, known as the MOVE ACT (Making Opportunities for Voucher Equity)**, which will directly improve protections for voucher holders like myself by increasing accountability, transparency, and enforcement.

Intro 0264: Increases fines for violations of the New York City Commission on Human Rights orders.

During my housing search with a CityFHEPS voucher, I contacted real estate agents and brokers interested in renting out an apartment advertised online on StreetEasy and Apartments.com. One particular broker invited me to view an apartment. When I arrived, the broker told me that the apartment could not be rented to me when I mentioned I had a CityFHEPS voucher to pay the rent. The broker gaslighted me, telling me that the rent was higher than my voucher amount, which I knew was false. I felt hopeless and frustrated because I needed a stable place to live and wanted to leave my unsafe apartment at that time. I was also upset about the long commute. I hoped that the apartment would be my new home. I know I wasn't the only one experiencing rejection because of how I pay rent. At that time, I wasn't aware of my rights as a voucher holder, and I believed others did not know theirs either.

Intro 0265: Increases fines for discrimination in housing.

As mentioned, I know some brokers and landlords frequently discriminate against voucher holders, hoping we aren't aware of our rights or won't report it. Passing these bills will demonstrate commitment to fairness and accountability, reassuring voucher holders and advocate that the city is serious about ending discrimination and protecting our rights.. Intro 0265 aims to make serial discriminators pay for their risky decisions as gatekeepers of the housing market, with too much power over prospective tenants like me seeking a home .

Intro 0266: Removes credit history or minimum income requirements.

Credit doesn't pay rent — my housing voucher does! During my housing search, I faced numerous barriers and gatekeeping practices that discouraged me and affected my mental health. Every time I expressed interest in an apartment, the broker asked for my credit and income information. When I shared my income and my housing voucher to pay the rent, I was often found unqualified because I didn't meet the landlord's requirements. Many listings online specify a credit score of 680 or higher and an income of 40 times the rent, which amounts to a six-figure income. Most voucher holders are extremely low to very low-income, so we would not qualify under these standards. Removing credit history and income requirements would allow voucher holders to access housing without relying on a flawed credit-check system.

Intro 0267: Creates transparency and fairness in tenant screening.

Under this bill, landlords are required to provide a written explanation within three business days if a voucher holder's application is denied. This transparency will discourage discrimination and must clarify the reasons for denial. It exposes any covert source of income discrimination tactics and this is what transparency looks like in practice. From my experience, I have not yet reached this step in the application process. Still, I know that some landlords and brokers encourage voucher holders to submit applications in ways that subtly discriminate against us, then ignore us, denying us a fair shot.

Intro 0268: Disincentivizes discriminatory practices.

Intro 0268 proposes treating the source of income discrimination as a form of harassment under the Certificate of No Harassment Program. This program prevents landlords found guilty of harassment from obtaining permits to alter or demolish buildings. It may require owners to build a certain percentage of low-income housing to address their offending behavior. When landlords previously found guilty of discrimination pay fines and continue their practices, they are engaging in predatory behavior, making them serial discriminators.

Intro 0269: Publicly lists findings of source of income discrimination.

Discriminatory landlords will have their violations listed on a public website. This transparency will help tenants understand landlords' discriminatory histories, enabling them to make informed housing choices and document potential discrimination. Creating a list that flags and triggers source of income discrimination will serve as a tool for accountability and pressure bad actors to comply with the law. Every day, the City's Commission enforcement efforts are hindered by

underfunding, leaving vouchers feeling neglected and vulnerable. I urge the City Council to allocate \$25 million in the FY 26-27 budget to restore confidence in enforcement and justice.

In summations, I call for prioritizing for fully funding the agency and passing the **MOVE ACT bill package**, which aims to strengthen enforcement of source-of-income protections. The MOVE Act will increase transparency by requiring landlords that discriminates against voucher holders to include source of income discrimination as a form of harassment on listing landlords their building profile with the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), enforce higher penalties based on their number of dwellings or portfolio size, and increase penalties for noncompliance by Commissioners orders. We need strong enforcement and adequate resources to advance equity and housing justice in New York City.

Thank you for your time and commitment to advancing equity New Yorkers.

Sincerely,

Khaliyl Mayes

My name is Lila Perlman and I am a lover of NYC parks. Funding for PlayFair is integral to keeping parks running, and keeping New Yorkers engaged with our amazing nature.

Playfair Parkies compose a large section of the workforce and do everything from opening key facilities to beautifying our green spaces to leading educational programs on places like Hart Island. Parks would not function the way they do now without Playfair funding!

The Parks Department always has to do so much with so little. If Playfair isn't renewed, every branch of Parks, and the Public, will certainly feel that loss.

Please keep Playfair lines funded! So many hardworking employees rely on that funding to keep their positions. Thank you!

**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: Dina Lively (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: [Redacted] 100 Gold

I represent: HPD

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: Michael Sanchez (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: HPD

Address: 100 Gold Street

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Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: Annmarie Santiago (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: Ampt - Street

I represent: HPD

Address: 100 Gold Street

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

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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: FAMILY 039002

Address: _____

I represent: [REDACTED] HPO

Address: 100 GOLD STREET

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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: LUVIN JOFFEY

Address: _____

I represent: HPO

Address: 100 GOLD STREET

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ROSA KEIN

Address: _____

I represent: HPO

Address: 100 GOLD STREET

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: PATRICK LOVE

Address: _____

I represent: HPD

Address: 100 Bow Street

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Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MICKA AMPIY-SAMUEL

Address: _____

I represent: HPD

Address: 100 Bow Street

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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: Ahmed Tigan

Address: 280 Broadway 10007

I represent: NYC DOB

Address: _____

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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: Guillermo Patino

Address: 280 Broadway 10007

I represent: NYC DOB

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: Yegor Shamash

Address: 280 Broadway 10007

I represent: NYC DOB

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: MARK SANABRIA

Address: 280 BROADWAY

I represent: Dept of Buildings

Address: SAME

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Gina Waarte - DC of Finance

Address: 280 Broadway

I represent: Department of Buildings

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 3/24/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Laura Papa

Address: 280 Bldwy

I represent: DOB

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 1/24/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jackie Del Valle

Address: _____

I represent: Taken Rail Justice Stabilizing NYC

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 3/24/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Pilar Dejtas

Address: _____

I represent: Taken Rail Justice

Address: 123 Williams St

Public

**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: Graham Gale

Address: _____

I represent: Food + Water Watch

Address: 32 Court St

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

21

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

Budget in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: Pete Sikora (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: New York Communities for Change

Address: 275 Degraw St. B Brooklyn NY

**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: 3/24/26

Name: Pamela Herrera (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: Western Queens Community Land Trust

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: 3/24/2020

Name: Kevin Wike (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 60 Broad Street NY NY 10004

I represent: CNYCN

Address: 60 Broad Street NY, NY 10004

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

27

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sophia Fenn, New York Legal Assistance Group
Address: 100 Pearl Street, 14th Floor, New York NY 10216

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: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: RICHARD TROUTH
Address: 20 BANCKROFT PL

I represent: BROOKLYN NEIGH. SYCP

Address: 20 BANCKROFT PL

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

25

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rosalind Black

Address: _____

I represent: Legal Services NYC

Address: 40 West St, NY, NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

24

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 3/24/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: GREG ROBERTS

Address: 1144 EVERGREEN AVENUE BX, NY

I represent: SKF DEVELOPMENT

Address: 1144 EVERGREEN AVE BX, NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

23

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: James Coger

Address: _____

I represent: The Center for Justice Innovation

Address: 520 8th Ave.

**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: 3/24/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Arnelle Hersh

Address: _____

I represent: UHAB

Address: 120 Wall St, 20th Fl, 10005

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: Antonin Albergo

Address: [REDACTED] NYC 10034

I represent: Community Leader Coalition for Homeless

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: 3-24-2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Edmundo "Alex" Gomez

Address: 129 Fulton St

I represent: Coalition for the Homeless

Address: Ms. Howard Ave

**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: 3/24/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sara Newman

Address: 318 W. 121st St. New York, NY 10027

I represent: Open Hearts Initiative

Address: W/A

Public

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: 3/24/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tricia Lendro

Address: 260 Broadway Brooklyn NY 11211

I represent: Build Up Justice NYC

Address: _____

Public

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: Emily Klein

Address: _____

I represent: Community Preservation Corp.

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. Budget Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Brendan Cheney

Address: _____

I represent: NY Housing Conference

Address: _____

NHS PANEL

5 OF 5

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: YOSELIN GENAO

Address: _____

I represent: NHS QUEENS

Address: _____

NHS PANEL

4 OF 5

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: RICHARD TROUTH

Address: _____

I represent: BROOKLYN NEIGHBORHOOD

Address: SERVICES

NHS PANEL

3 OF 5

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: ANGELA CUMMINGS

Address: _____

I represent: NHS BROOKLYN

Address: _____



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



NHS PANEL

THE COUNCIL

2 OF 5

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: GLADSTONE JOHNSON

Address: _____

I represent: BRONX - NHS

Address: _____

NHS PANEL

THE COUNCIL

1 OF 5

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: TONYA ORES

Address: _____

I represent: NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING SERVICES

Address: OF NEW YORK CITY

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. CLT Funding Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Melanie Reyes

Address: Melrose Avenue 10451

I represent: We Stay / Nos Quedamos

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: 3/24/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Frank Shintaro McMullin

Address: [Redacted] Brooklyn

I represent: Live On NY

Address: W 45th Street, 7th Floor, Manhattan

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Brianna Sturkey

Address: _____

I represent: NYLPI - New York Lawyers

Address: In the Public Interest

**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: Yoselin Genao-Estrella

Address: _____

I represent: NHS Queens

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: 3-24-26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Eustacia Smith

Address: [REDACTED] NY, NY 10025

I represent: West Side Federation for Senior +

Address: 2345 Broadway Supportive Housing

**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: MARIE REPUGNA

Address: [REDACTED]

I represent: Elliot Housing

Address: [REDACTED]

**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: 3/24/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DAREN SEALEY

Address: _____

I represent: Center for Justice Innovation

Address: 520 5th Avenue, FL 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: 3-24-26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Malika Khalsa

Address: 475 Riverside Drive, New York
NY 10115

I represent: Salvadori Center

Address: 475 Riverside Drive, New York
NY 10115

**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: 3/24/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Yaniv Kot

Address: 111 Livingston Street, 7th Floor Brooklyn, NY 11011

I represent: The Legal Aid Society

Address: Same

**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: 3/24/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Katie Mui

Address: [Redacted] 10011 NY

I represent: Supportive Housing Network of NY

Address: 247 W 34th FL 18 NY

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: EMILY KLEIN

Address: _____

I represent: COMMUNITY PRESERVATION CORP.

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: 3/24/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ann Elizabeth Brown

Address: 100 William Street

I represent: Right to Counsel / Mobilization

Address: For Justice

**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: 03/24/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: VANESSA LEONG

Address: [REDACTED] 11/01

I represent: WGCLT

Address: LIC, NY



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

