

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

----- X

December 14, 2020

Start: 1:06 p.m.

Recess: 4:30 p.m.

HELD AT: Remote Hearing - Virtual Room 3

B E F O R E: Stephen T. Levin
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Stephen T. Levin
Darma V. Diaz
Ben Kallos
Alan N. Maisel
Bill Perkins
Keith Powers
Ydanis Rodriguez
Kalman Yeger
Brad S. Lander
Barry S. Grodenchik
Robert F. Holden
Helen K. Rosenthal
Vanessa L. Gibson
Rafael Salamanca, Jr.

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Annette Holm

Jennifer Kelly

Michael Bosket

Erin Drinkwater

Emily Lehman

Gail Wolsk

Craig [inaudible]

Theodora Ranelli

Craig Hughes

Gioselle Ruthier

Eric Lee

Laura Missou

Emily Friedman

Sandra Dressel

Debra Berkman

Sarah Blanco

James Dill

Arlo Chase

Theo Chino

Chi Osse

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

SERGEANT AT ARMS SADOWSKY: PC recording has started.

SERGEANT AT ARMS HOPE: Thank you.

SERGEANT AT ARMS BIONDO: Cloud recording started.

SERGEANT AT ARMS HOPE: Thank you. OK, backup, OK. Ah, Sergeant Polite, you may begin with your opening statement.

SERGEANT AT ARMS POLITE: Thank you. Good afternoon and welcome to the remote hearing on general welfare. Will council members and staff please turn on their videos at this time? Once again, will council members and staff please turn on their video at this time. Thank you. To minimize disruption, please place all cell phones and electronic devices to vibrate. You may send your testimony at testimony@council.nyc.gov. Once again, that's testimony@council.nyc.gov. Chair Levin, we are ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much, Sergeant. Ah, good morning, everybody, and welcome to this hearing of the City Council's Committee on General Welfare. Today the committee will conduct an oversight hearing on the progress in developing

1
2 supportive housing units and what strategies, if any,
3 are in place to ensure that those with the highest
4 need have access to supportive housing. The
5 committee will also explore how COVID-19 has impacted
6 the development of supportive housing and how the
7 city plans to address such challenges. Supportive
8 housing is a form of affordable housing that offers
9 residents access to on-site support in order to help
10 low-income people and those experiencing homelessness
11 and/or disability live independently in the
12 community. Services in supportive housing vary
13 depending on the needs of the population, but in
14 many, but many include mental and medical health
15 care, vocational and employment services, child care,
16 independent living skills, training, and substance
17 abuse counseling. We know that supportive housing is
18 the important model we have for ending homelessness
19 among vulnerable populations. In November of 2015
20 Mayor de Blasio announced that the city would provide
21 2.6 billion dollars in capital funding to develop
22 15,000 units of supportive housing over the next 15
23 years and as of December of 2019 the city financed
24 the preservation and creation of 6225 supportive
25 housing units under this plan, including the

1 construction of 4650 supportive housing units and the
2 preservation of 1575 units. These are desperately
3 needed units and unfortunately the need remains
4 significantly higher than what has been produced
5 since the launch of New York 1515. The committee
6 will also hear bills that I've introduced. The first
7 would ensure that police officers are no longer
8 involved in outreach efforts and that these efforts
9 be limited only to DHA staff and contracted outreach
10 workers. Experiencing homelessness on the street and
11 in the subways is not a crime and I hope that this
12 bill will ensure that there is less harm done by
13 limiting the investment of police in these
14 interactions. The piece of legislation is, is a, is
15 a supportive housing bill, sorry, another piece of
16 legislation is the supportive housing bill of rights,
17 to be written by DSS and distributed by supportive
18 housing providers to their tenants upon initial
19 occupancy at each lease renewal and upon request.
20 This bill would help improve transparency by insuring
21 every tenant in supportive housing has their rights
22 made known to them. I want to thank the advocates
23 and members of the public for joining us today. I
24 want to thank the representatives from the
25

1 administration who will be joining us as well. And I
2 look forward to hearing from you all on these
3 critical issue. And at this time I would like to
4 acknowledge my colleagues who are here today. We're
5 joined by Council Member Brad Lander, Council Member
6 Barry Grodenchik, Council Member Bob Holden, and
7 that's it for now. We expect more throughout the
8 course of the hearing. I also want to thank staff
9 that have worked on this, ah, Jonathan Bouchet,
10 Motiva Staff, oh, Council Member Helen Rosenthal has
11 joined us as well, um, Elizabeth Adams, my
12 legislative director, committee staff, Amita Kilowan,
13 senior counsel, Crystal Pond, senior policy analyst,
14 Natalie Omery, policy analyst, and Frank Sarno,
15 finance analyst. I also have to thank, um, ah, our
16 sergeants as well as Johanna Castro for, um, ah, for
17 organizing this hearing today, um, and, ah, with that
18 I will turn it over to our committee counsel, ah, to
19 administer the, um, the affirmation.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair,
22 Chair Levin. Good afternoon, everyone. I am Amita
23 Kilowan, senior counsel to the General Welfare
24 Committee of the New York City Council. I'm going to
25 be moderating today's hearing. Before we begin, I

1 want to remind you that you'll be on mute until
2 you're called on to testify, at which point you will
3 be unmuted by the host. I'll be calling on panelists
4 to testify. Please listen for your name to be called
5 and I'll periodically be announcing who the next
6 panel will be. Our first panel will be members of
7 the administration. Testifying for the
8 administration is Annette Holm and available for
9 questions and answers is Jennifer Kelly, Bosket, Erin
10 Drinkwater, Emily Lehman, and Gail Wolsk. During the
11 hearing if council members would like to ask a
12 question please use the Zoom raise hand function and
13 Chair Levin will call on you in order. And we are
14 going to be limiting council member questions to five
15 minutes, and that includes answers. I'm now going to
16 deliver the oath to the members of the administration
17 who will be testifying as well as those who are here
18 to respond to questions, and I will read off each of
19 your names and after that point you may respond,
20 beginning with Annette Holm. Do you affirm to tell
21 the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth
22 before this committee and to respond honestly to
23 council member questions?
24

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

9

2 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: I
3 do.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And now moving on to
5 Jennifer Kelly. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
6 whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this
7 committee and to respond honestly to council member
8 questions?

9 JENNIFER KELLY: I do.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And now Michael
11 Bosket. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole
12 truth, and nothing but the truth before this
13 committee and to respond honestly to council member
14 questions?

15 MICHAEL BOSKET: I do.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Erin Drinkwater, Do
17 you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and
18 nothing but the truth before this committee and to
19 respond honestly to council member questions?

20 ERIN DRINKWATER: I do.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Emily Lehman, Do you
22 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and
23 nothing but the truth before this committee and to
24 respond honestly to council member questions?

25 EMILY LEHMAN: I do.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And finally to Gail
3 Wolsk. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole
4 truth, and nothing but the truth before this
5 committee and to respond honestly to council member
6 questions?

7 GAIL WOLSK: I do.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You may begin your
9 testimony.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HOLT: Good morning.
11 Thank you, Chairperson Levin and members of the City
12 Council's General Welfare Committee for the
13 opportunity to testify today about supportive
14 housing, a critically necessary resource in the fight
15 against homelessness. I am Annette Holm, chief
16 special services officer, at the New York City Human
17 Resources Administration. Today I am joined by
18 colleagues from the Department of Housing
19 Preservation and Development, Emily Lehman, assistant
20 commissioner for the division of special needs
21 housing, and from the Department of Health and Mental
22 Hygiene Gail Wolsk, senior director, Office of
23 Housing Services, as well as my Human Resources
24 Administration colleagues, deputy commissioner of the
25 Office of Supportive Affordable Housing and Services,

1 Jennifer Kelly, deputy commissioner of Customized
2 Assistant Services, Michael Bosket, and Erin
3 Drinkwater, deputy commissioner of intergovernmental
4 and legislative affairs. It has been 40 years since
5 the first supportive housing project residents in New
6 York City opened its doors. While much has changed
7 since that time, we continue to rely on the benefit
8 from this proven, evidence-based resource, which
9 combines permanent affordable housing with supportive
10 social services, so individuals and families are able
11 to achieve their maximum level of independence and
12 health in a safe, supportive environment. Supportive
13 housing projects provides high-quality independent
14 living environments for vulnerable New Yorkers who
15 might otherwise find themselves in more restrictive
16 and more expensive institutional settings, such as
17 psychiatric hospitals, emergency rooms, jails, and
18 shelter. This permanent housing model includes
19 voluntary services that are focused on positively
20 impacting tenants' quality of life, assisting in
21 their personal path of addressing mental health
22 challenges and/or substance use. Services are
23 customized to meet the unique needs of each resident
24 and can include mental health and substance use
25

1 services, employment services and resources, and
2 education service and resources. For families with
3 children the program provides the supports needed to
4 maintain a safe home environment, conducive to
5 healthy development of their children. In 1990 the
6 New York, NY One agreement between the Dinkins and
7 Cuomo administrations created 3615 units of
8 supportive housing. This first-of-its-kind agreement
9 licensed permanent and transitional housing for
10 individuals experiencing homelessness who have been
11 diagnosed with mental illness in New York City. New
12 York, NY One population groups targeted single New
13 Yorkers experiencing homelessness with a serious
14 mental illness or individuals with serious mental
15 illness with a co-occurring substance use disorder.
16 The second New York, NY Two in 1999 under the
17 Guiliani and Pataki administrations created an
18 additional 1500 units of supportive housing for
19 individuals experiencing homelessness who have been
20 diagnosed with mental illness. This agreement
21 resulted in 45.7 million and 85 million in state and
22 city capital funding for supportive housing,
23 respectively. Finally, the New York, NY Three
24 agreement in 2005 between the Bloomberg and Pataki
25

1 administrations committed to create 9 units of
2 supportive housing in New York City over 10 years.
3 As of September 2020, of the 9000 planned units for
4 New York, NY Three 8900 have been awarded. Of those
5 8900 awarded units, 8487 are fully developed for
6 occupancy. Of those 8487 ready units, the overall
7 state city occupancy rate is 90%, with a total of
8 7593 New Yorkers moving into New York, NY Three units
9 between January 2014 and September 2020, and the
10 remainder having moved in prior to 2014. The
11 occupancy rate for the city-contracted New York, NY
12 Three units is 95%, as it has been for many years.
13 These 14,115 units were not enough to meet the need
14 of vulnerable New Yorkers and in November of 2015
15 Mayor de Blasio announced New York City 1515, which
16 is the largest municipal commitment to supportive
17 housing. New York City 1515 will result in the
18 development of 15,000 units of supportive housing
19 over 15 years and is modeled on the New York NY
20 agreements. Over 15 years the city, excuse me, over
21 15 years the city will create 7500 newly built
22 congregate units and obtain an additional 7500
23 scattered site units. These residents units are
24 equipped with on-site case management and supportive
25

1 services and adhere to safety and quality standards
2 in accordance with local, state, and federal laws and
3 regulations. Funding for 5306 New York City 1515
4 units has been awarded, which is more than a third of
5 the 15-year total. Through September 2020 more than
6 2300 people have already moved into nearly 1800 New
7 York City 1515 units, and another 109 were linked to
8 homes and in the process of moving in. In supportive
9 housing a family or individual pays 30% of their
10 income towards rent. Participation in services is
11 not required to maintain their tenancy, but many
12 tenants do in fact take advantage of the
13 comprehensive services, including case management,
14 educational, vocational and other recovery-oriented
15 services, individualized service planning and
16 supportive counseling, assistance in navigating and
17 gaining access to community services and government
18 benefits such as food stamps and legal advocacy,
19 referrals to medical and behavioral health care and
20 treatment, and recommendations and support in
21 developing skills for financial self-sufficiency.
22 This stable and permanent housing for New Yorkers
23 with mental illness and substance use challenges who
24 have experienced homelessness as well as other
25

1 vulnerable populations, such as New Yorkers with HIV,
2 provides an environment of support and increases
3 connections to services, increasing positive outcomes
4 for those living in supportive housing. Supportive
5 housing reduces the city's reliance on homeless
6 shelters, hospitals, mental health institutions, and
7 incarceration, setting up these individuals and
8 families for success and in the long term saves the
9 taxpayer higher costs. The Department of Housing
10 Preservation and Development, DHS, and HRA
11 communicate daily to coordinate our response to the
12 homelessness crisis. One of the major avenues is
13 through our efforts to refer and place homeless
14 households out of shelters and into permanent
15 housing. For supportive housing projects HPD, DOHMH,
16 and HRA conduct regular meetings so that HRA knows
17 when specific HPD buildings will be completing
18 construction and when apartments will become
19 available. HRA also attends marketing and leaser
20 kick-off meetings with HPD and the project
21 development teams so that they are aware of
22 construction and marketing timelines. When an
23 apartment is available HRA refers three eligible
24 shelter clients to the apartment and the service
25

1 provider makes their decision. Communication between
2 our agencies occurs at several, at several points,
3 drawing the referral and placement process. Our
4 agencies will continue to seek ways to streamline the
5 supportive and homeless housing referral process,
6 such as partnering on the design and implementation
7 of the coordinated assessment and placement system
8 and ensuring that the shelter system's most
9 vulnerable clients receive housing and the rental
10 assistance they need. It is essential that we
11 continue the progress we have made to create even
12 more supportive housing and the council has been a
13 critical partner in helping us build more of it. The
14 administration is extremely grateful to the council
15 members here today for helping us educate New Yorkers
16 about the benefits of supportive housing and for
17 welcoming a number of wonderful supportive housing
18 developments throughout the neighborhoods you
19 represent. Together since the start of Housing New
20 York we have financed more than 6250 supportive
21 housing homes with many more being closed on this
22 money in New York City 1515 and other programs. The
23 New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
24 has been contracting and providing program monitoring
25

1 and technical assistance to supportive housing
2 providers the initial development of programs in the
3 mid-1980s. Currently DOHMH plays a lead role in
4 contracting, monitoring, and evaluation of services
5 for individuals in 9718 units of the city's
6 supportive housing units. These units are in 170
7 congregate site buildings and 80 scatter site
8 programs. These units were developed under the
9 following program initiatives - New York, NY One,
10 Two, and Three, High Service Needs One and Two,
11 Justice-Informed Supportive Housing, JISH, and New
12 York City 1515. Additionally, HRA oversees services
13 to 1000 units for individuals with HIV while services
14 in 4150 units are supported by state agencies. In
15 addition to working with HRA and HPD to develop units
16 in the New York City 1515 initiative DOHMH is
17 currently monitoring provision of services in this
18 program to more than 2300 people, who have already
19 moved into 1515 supportive housing through 12
20 contracts providing congregate housing and an
21 additional 26 contracts of scattered site housing.
22 Moreover, HRA works to refer clients to these units
23 while confirming that the recommendations from the
24 2016 Mayor's Task Force on Supportive Housing are
25

1 fulfilled. As mentioned, DOHMH will consumer to
2 provide programs the technical and contract
3 management support necessary to ensure services meet
4 the needs of tenants are evidence-based and focus on
5 the recovery of individuals and families. Service
6 evaluation plays a critical part in the city's
7 supportive, supporting housing program. And DOHMH
8 coordinates with partners at the city and state level
9 to measure a wide range of quantitative and
10 qualitative data on the programs above. With DOHMH's
11 support we are able to gather and understand the
12 health, social and fiscal impacts of these supportive
13 housing programs via feedback collected from tenants
14 and providers. Based on this information, which is
15 highlighted by the New York, NY Three interim
16 evaluation report, we have seen net savings at above
17 \$10,000 annually for single adults housed in
18 supportive housing. The Human Resources
19 Administration Office of Supportive Affordable
20 Housing and Services is focused on permanent housing
21 solutions for individuals and families who have
22 experienced homelessness. OSAHS works closely with
23 other divisions of HRA, our sister agencies,
24 particularly DOHMH and HPD, as well as service
25

1 providers, to establish new housing programs and to
2 serve as the centralized source for the referral of
3 applicants to supportive housing. OSAHS coordination
4 and collaboration with our sister agencies and
5 nonprofit partners are geared to ensure that the
6 people we serve are able to achieve their maximum
7 functional capacity in a safe, supportive
8 environment. In early 2016 a supportive housing task
9 force, including city agencies, supportive housing
10 providers, and advocates was convened and in December
11 of that year issued a report which included 23
12 recommendations for New York City 1515 to expand and
13 improve upon the previous New York, NY agreements.
14 The recommendations were grouped into four categories
15 - data and evaluation, referral process, service
16 models, and streamlining development. Today we are
17 well under way in the implementation of those
18 recommendations. More than 90% of the
19 recommendations are either completed or ongoing and
20 the remaining recommends are in the process of being
21 implemented. I want to highlight a few important
22 reforms today, including updates to the New York City
23 Coordinated Assessment and Placement System, CAPS,
24 and the Standardized Vulnerability Assessment, SVA,
25

1 and COVID-19-related reforms. On October 26, 2020,
2 pursuant to the federal Department of Housing and
3 Urban Development required, requirements, HRA
4 implemented Coordinated Assessment and Placement
5 System. CAPS is the comprehensive redesign of the
6 Placement, Assessment, and Client Tracking, PACT,
7 system to better incorporate the HUD requirements for
8 coordinated entry in New York City and now integrates
9 all application eligibility determination, referral,
10 and placement activities into one system. The CAPS
11 system also interfaces with DHS, HASA, DYCD, and
12 Medicaid systems for data. Additional interfaces
13 with DOC and other entities is planned throughout
14 2021. These interfaces provide demographic, homeless
15 status, and other data to support and facilitate
16 application and eligibility determination completion.
17 We anticipate this will increase efficiencies in
18 placing individuals and families experiencing
19 homelessness as they transition to permanent housing.
20 Other enhancements include an easy-to-complete
21 coordinated assessment survey for users and clients
22 of the types of housing and housing subsidies and
23 supports clients may be eligible for, retrieval of
24 prior applications and copies of documents HRA is in
25

1 receipt of that are required for placement, pre-
2 populating application fields from system
3 integrations with DHS, HASA, DYCD, and HRA systems,
4 electronic 2010e supportive and general population
5 housing applications, a standardized vulnerability
6 index that assists DHS, HRA, to focus on those
7 clients with the highest vulnerability and likelihood
8 for continued homelessness, a vacancy control system
9 which upon release had over 30,000 units of
10 supportive and other housing units captured within it
11 and allows HRA, DHS the ability the monitor vacancies
12 and increase the speed at which we are able to make
13 placements, electronic referrals, appointments, and
14 documentation transmission for clients to be referred
15 to for interviews with housing providers, the ability
16 for housing providers to act on referrals in the
17 system and relay the outcome of the client interview
18 and acceptance of placement. In addition to
19 coordinating the New York City 1515 supportive
20 housing efforts, HRA is working with our New York
21 State partners to make referrals of households
22 experiencing homelessness into units that New York
23 State has developed as part of their Empire State
24 Supportive Housing Initiative, ESSHI. Our collective
25

1 work includes developing requirements and assessing
2 eligibility for some distinct state ESSHI categories
3 and working with our DHS shelter providers and street
4 homeless programs to refer eligible candidates to
5 these units. Working with our state partners and
6 their nonprofit providers has expanded supportive
7 housing opportunities for DHS clients in many areas,
8 for example frail and elderly populations,
9 individuals with mental health diagnosis, and
10 survivors of domestic violence. This is a meaningful
11 component to the existing supportive housing
12 portfolio. We recently partnered with the New York
13 State Office of Mental Health on an initiative to
14 house clients experiencing street homeless. New York
15 State identified more than 200 units in their ESSHI
16 portfolio specifically for this population. To date,
17 we have linked almost 90% of the units to clients
18 experiencing street homeless and in need of permanent
19 supportive housing. And the remaining clients are
20 waiting for the state's providers to locate scattered
21 site units. Last year HRA, DHS, HPD, and DOHMH
22 worked in collaboration with community stakeholders
23 to create several key recommendations to increase
24 access to supportive housing. Recommendations
25

1 include streamlining the housing application process,
2 expanding the pool of professionals who can submit
3 psychiatric evaluations, and expediting the housing
4 application process. The goals of these
5 recommendations are to reduce client barriers and
6 enhance the client experience throughout the
7 application, interview, and move-in process for
8 supportive housing. Finally, in our continued effort
9 to better serve New Yorkers in need of supportive
10 housing, we are assessing and updating the online
11 supportive housing application, completed by a
12 referral agency, known as the 2010e application. For
13 example, we are ensuring that questions regarding
14 preferred spoken language and ethnicity include the
15 top 30 languages in New York City and a comprehensive
16 listing of ethnicity choices, respectively. We are
17 also ensuring that more responses, such as nonbinary
18 and gender nonconforming, are included under gender
19 identity, so that clients can properly express how
20 they identify. Developed through the work of the
21 supportive housing task force during 2016 the New
22 York City Standardized Vulnerability Assessment is
23 conducted on all approved HRA supportive housing
24 application referrals. This assessment takes into
25

1 consideration the applicant's living situation,
2 current and history, Medicaid utilization, challenges
3 impacting their independence, and functional
4 limitations. And from those metrics determines the
5 level of continued vulnerability of homelessness.
6 The SBA uses a categorical system of high, medium,
7 and low vulnerability. HRA continues to work with
8 our government, community, provider, and advocacy
9 group partners and from these collaborative efforts
10 in 2019 further refined the SBA better to assess
11 uniquely vulnerable groups, including unsheltered
12 individuals, survivors of domestic violence, intimate
13 partner violence, families with children, and young
14 adults. COVID-19 required us as an agency to take a
15 look at our processes so that we could continue to
16 serve clients so that we could continue to serve
17 clients in a means that prioritized their health and
18 safety, as well as that of our staff. As such, in
19 the early state of the pandemic we set up processes
20 with housing providers and DHS staff to conduct
21 clinical interviews remotely. We also set up a
22 system and process for property management interviews
23 to be conducted virtually wherever possible. Our
24 partners at HPD also transformed their manual process
25

1 to include e-signatures on documents in lieu of
2 original signatures, as well as remote briefings. We
3 see a great benefit to our clients in conducting
4 interviews in this manner, including no-shows to
5 interviews. We have worked with our partners at
6 DOHMH to support increased capacity for congregate
7 programs to isolate tenants on site or to utilize the
8 city's hoteling program. DOHMH has supported
9 provider use of virtual services to ensure service
10 provision that supports the health and wellness of
11 all tenants and staff. This includes virtual
12 meetings, increasing access to Wi-Fi for tenants, and
13 support with PPE supplies for providers.
14 Additionally, there are added efficiencies for DHS-
15 funded programs and supportive housing providers
16 alike. We intend to continue these changes post
17 COVID when we are no longer required to social
18 distance and limit in-person interactions. Overall,
19 there have been 11,883 supportive housing placements
20 from DHS shelter from the beginning of this
21 administration in January 2014 through September
22 2020. Included in these numbers are recent
23 supportive housing placements from DHS shelters
24 across various programs. In the calendar year 20
25

1 through September 2020 DSS, DHS, HRA placed 1035
2 households into permanent supportive housing from DHS
3 shelters. This includes ongoing placements into the
4 various congregate and scatter site supportive
5 housing programs, including New York, NY One through
6 Three, general population supportive housing, New
7 York State license programs, and ESSHI, and
8 placements into new New York City 1515 programs.
9 Progress on this administration's ambitious New York
10 City is also on target. Construction awards through
11 September 2020 are as follows. We have awarded 5306
12 1515 units, including 1255 scattered site and 4051
13 congregate units. Across all city agencies through
14 September 2020 nearly 1800 households, comprised of
15 more than 2300 New Yorkers have been connected to
16 1515 supportive housing units, including more than
17 1700 households comprised of more than 2200 people
18 who already moved into homes and another 109
19 households who were linked to homes and in the
20 process of moving as of September 28, 2020. As of
21 September 2020 HR's HASA program has a contracted
22 supportive housing portfolio of 5362 units, of which
23 4924 units are already occupied. HASA spends about
24 141.5 million annually for these units. 2672
25

1 scattered site units, including New York, NY Three
2 and non-New York, NY Three, of which 93.4%, 2496
3 individuals, are occupied. Excuse me, 2496 units are
4 occupied. And the remaining units are in the process
5 of development or rent up. 2690 permanent congregate
6 units, including New York, NY Three and non-New York,
7 NY Three, of which 90% are occupied. I would now
8 like to turn to the legislation being heard as part
9 of today's hearing. Intro number 2177, sponsored by
10 Chair Levin, would amend the administrative code of
11 the City of New York in relation to outreach to
12 unsheltered individuals. This bill, if enacted,
13 would limit outreach to unsheltered individuals to
14 Department of Homeless Service or staff contracted by
15 the department to contact and offer services to
16 unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness.
17 The administration is reviewing the impact of this
18 legislation that has just been introduced. Upon
19 initial review and preliminary discussions with
20 providers and sister agencies we have some concerns.
21 Based on these conversations, we believe as drafted
22 this bill impacts the work of agencies other than
23 DHS, including the FDNY, EMS, DOHMH, and the Parks
24 Department. While our teams of experienced outreach
25

1 providers are generally able to build relationships
2 with street homeless individuals that is not always
3 the case. For example, where a client has previously
4 been violent or credibly threatened violence against
5 outreach workers but needs to be checked on for his
6 or own safety, our outreach workers are trained to
7 deescalate dangerous situations and work within
8 individuals who have a history of violence. However,
9 when the most rigorous training will not always
10 enable an outreach worker to safely interact with a
11 client our work includes balancing the interests of
12 our staff, our clients, and the general public. We
13 have strong concerns that the bill will impede us
14 from achieving that responsibility and servicing some
15 of our most in-need individuals. We look forward to
16 further discussions with the chair and the council.
17 Intro 2176, also sponsored by Chair Levin, would
18 amend the administrative code of the City of New York
19 in relationship to requiring the Department of Social
20 Services to create a written notice for supportive
21 housing residents of their rights pursuant to various
22 state and local laws, as well as certain information
23 about the building regulatory scheme. The bill would
24 require every provider of supportive housing to
25

1 provide every resident this notice at the time of
2 initial occupancy, at each lease renewal, and upon
3 request. Additionally, the bill would subject any
4 provider who violates the notice requirement to a
5 civil penalty of \$250. The administration is
6 reviewing the impact of this legislation that has
7 just been introduced and we look forward to further
8 discussions with the chair and the council. Upon
9 initial review it appears this bill would set a
10 different standard for city contracted projects
11 compared to those administered by the state. While
12 we are supportive of the general intent of the bill
13 to increase transparency and provide tenants with
14 useful information, we hope to work with the sponsor
15 and stakeholder to address concerns. Supportive
16 housing is a proven resource for individuals and
17 families experiencing homelessness. Voluntary
18 services coupled with quality permanent housing
19 results in positive impacts for tenants' quality of
20 life. This housing first model benefits individuals
21 and families as well as neighborhoods and communities
22 at large. The biggest failure of supportive housing
23 is that there is simply not enough of it to address
24 the need. This is why this administration made the
25

1
2 single largest municipal commitment to develop 15,000
3 units over 15 years and continue to work with our
4 state partners to ensure an equal commitment. We
5 look forward with you, we look forward with our
6 continued work with the council to ensure that each
7 community is playing their part to welcome this
8 permanent affordable housing model to their
9 neighborhoods. And, additionally, we look forward to
10 our work together to ensure the state renews its
11 commitment and funds, the ESSHI program, in the fiscal
12 year 22 budget. Thank you again for this opportunity
13 to testify, and we welcome your questions.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,
15 Ms. Holm. Um, I appreciate your testimony, excuse
16 me, I appreciate all the work that you and your staff
17 do day in and day out, 'cause I know that this is,
18 um, ah, not easy work, um, and, ah, and requires a
19 significant amount of attention to detail, um, and,
20 ah, ah, stick-to-it-ness to borrow a phrase from
21 Council Member Grodenchik, um, because these,
22 because, because cases are, ah, to see them through
23 from one, um, from the beginning to end is, ah, it
24 takes, it takes a long time. Um, I want to
25 acknowledge we've also been joined by Council Member

1
2 Gibson, Council Member Salamanca, um, Council Member
3 Diaz, um, and I believe that's all of the council
4 members who have joined. Um, so I want to first ask
5 some kind of, ah, a general question, if I may. Um,
6 with, can you take us through, um, the, the process
7 for somebody who is on the street, um, and, um, has a
8 history of, um, mental health diagnoses and, ah, ah,
9 is continuing to face, ah, these challenges. What
10 would be, ah, a process for that person, a single
11 adult, um, from, um, being on the street, receiving
12 no services, to being, um, ah, in a, in a supportive
13 housing development and receiving the services that
14 they need? So what would be that process from end to
15 end? Can you explain that?

16 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: So
17 I will answer the first part of the question and when
18 we get to the housing piece I will defer to my
19 colleague, Jennifer Kelly, who will be able to
20 respond about the actual process of the housing. We
21 have, the Department of Homeless Services has an
22 excellent outreach program where they reach out to
23 street homeless and they work with individuals that
24 are, um, street homeless to get them assessed for
25 supportive housing. They will work, um, with the

1 client and attempt to have them evaluated, and once
2 they are evaluated at that particular point they can
3 be referred to a supportive housing development. So
4 I will hand off to Jennifer Kelly, who could go more
5 into that process.
6

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KELLY: Hello?

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Hi.

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KELLY: Hi, OK, OK,
10 thank you for your question. So as Annette says, the
11 first part of the process is really engaging with the
12 street homeless person and getting the application,
13 right, the 2010e, completed. Once that's done the
14 application comes into a queue where, where my staff
15 can see it, right, and we can make referrals to
16 different supportive housing units based on the
17 client's level of need and, and the services that the
18 supportive housing project provides, right? So a lot
19 of this is really just about trying to make a good
20 match. So what we do...

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Can I, can I just
22 interject really quickly, before we even get...

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KELLY: Go ahead.
24
25

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...to that point? Um,
3 ah, when is the 2010e, um, administered, or that,
4 when is that, um, given?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KELLY: It, it's done
6 at different times, I think, for different
7 individuals, depending on how much stability they
8 need, right? So some are done, I think, from the
9 outreach team literally while the person is on the
10 street, whereas other folks may need to be brought in
11 to the safe haven and stabilized there, in which case
12 they would follow that process at that point. But it
13 doesn't have to be one or the other.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um-hmm.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KELLY: [inaudible].

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: At what point are
17 they, at what point are the, is there, does somebody
18 have a CAPS, ah, entry, or does somebody have a CAPS
19 case?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KELLY: I think, when
21 you're, when now, because now we have the CAPS system
22 live, right, so when you are actually doing the
23 application you are entering the CAPS system at this
24 point, right? So, so you would do the assessment
25 survey, figure out what, what the best housing

1 options are for the individual, and then assuming,
2 presuming it's supportive housing in this case that
3 would lead you right into the supportive housing
4 application.
5

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um-hmm.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KELLY: So I, I hope
8 I'm answering your question. But I think at that
9 point they have entered officially the CAPS system.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK. Um, OK, you can
11 keep going. I didn't mean to interrupt, sorry.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KELLY: Oh, that's
13 OK. Um, so, so once the application is in the
14 system, as I said, my team can see it and we'll make
15 referrals. We would, we'll send three people usually
16 for every opportunity. We, we try to send
17 especially, we're very sensitive, ah, to this on
18 street homeless individuals, we try to send three
19 similarly situated individuals for each vacancy, um,
20 and then one individual is selected. If we're
21 renting up a building, so if there are a lot of
22 vacancies, we would send larger numbers of people en
23 masse and, and then it's, um, you know, they will
24 just select the people that they feel are a good
25 match for their program.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, um, and, um,
3 either Officer Holm or Deputy Commissioner Kelly can
4 answer this, so how, do we track how often people are
5 going from the street directly into supportive
6 housing without, without being in a shelter first, or
7 does that happen at all, or is there always an entry
8 into shelter somewhere?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KELLY: I mean, I'll
10 answer from my perspective and then, Annette, if you
11 want to add. I mean, we do not track it. I think
12 DHS may have statistics on that. We don't have those
13 statistics today. But I don't believe there ever has
14 to be an entry into shelter in order to do an
15 application. As I said, safe havens are not
16 technically considered shelters. Many people go into
17 those and then are placed from there. But there are
18 also other options where people are placed directly
19 from the street.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK. For the purposes
21 of this conversation let's consider safe havens to be
22 a form of shelter. They're within the DHS system.
23 So, it's just, I'm, I'm curious, how many people are
24 going directly from the street into a safe haven, or
25 if that happens at all?

1
2 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: We
3 would have to provide you with those numbers. We
4 don't have that right now available. But there are
5 cases where someone can be housed from the street
6 into a unit. But we would have to provide you with
7 those numbers.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, 'cause we do hear
9 that people from the street have the hardest time
10 getting into supportive housing. So, um, that's the
11 concern, is that, um, ah, they're often denied, um,
12 Commissioner Kelly, you said that, ah, if, if, for a
13 unit you'll, you'll, ah, the administration or the
14 system, I know the CAPS system will, ah, would
15 generate three names, um, that are in similar, in,
16 have similar circumstances, is that right?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KELLY: We have, we
18 have more discretion than that, really. It doesn't
19 just generate the name. So, you know, I mean, there
20 are, each unit is very, um, very specific just in
21 terms of, of the services that are provided, but also
22 the rental subsidies, so there's a lot of factors to,
23 um, to consider with, with each unit, but also client
24 preference is a factor that needs to be, you know,
25 considered, borough preference, things of that

1 nature, you know, if the unit's accessible for people
2 with ambulatory issues, all of these things. So, you
3 know, so we do have to take that into consideration,
4 but, yes, the system assists us in making matches
5 and, and that's, that's one of the benefits of it.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, how does the
8 system track, um, refusals or denials? So if, um,
9 somebody has, if somebody wants to know how many
10 times, say they're in safe haven, they've been in
11 safe haven, this is the hypothetical, been in safe
12 haven for, ah, 250 days. Um, how, how would they be
13 able to know how many times they've been, their name
14 has been submitted for a supportive housing unit and
15 how many times they've been denied and for what
16 reasons they've been?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KELLY: I think at
18 this point I'd actually like to turn this over to my
19 colleague, Michael Bosket, who, um, oversees the, the
20 CAPS implementation and I think he can talk a little
21 bit better about the data system.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOSKET: So, thank
24 you, Councilman Levin. What I, the system as, um,
25 Ms. Holm spoke about earlier was implemented on

1
2 October 26, so just a little bit under two months
3 ago, um, and as it's a new system I think that what
4 we have to say is that we're continuing to refine how
5 we collect data and this kind of data collected in an
6 electronic system is new for HRA. Um, while we
7 intend to collect that level of data it would be hard
8 to report that out at the time, but we are hoping to
9 produce that level of detailed data sometime in 2021.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK. And that's
11 obviously something that I think we would like to
12 know kind of in, um, as a bigger picture, um, you
13 know, what, what percentage, what reasons are being,
14 ah, people are being denied, what percentage they're
15 being denied, are being denied, and then, and then I
16 think certainly more, more granularly, I think if I
17 was as a, a person who had filled out a 2010e and was
18 awaiting a supportive housing unit and, you know,
19 was, was in a shelter for a year I would want to know
20 why. I'd want to know what, you know, what's, how
21 many times and for what reasons I, I would be denied.
22 Is there, is there an expiration date on the 2010e?
23 You feel the 2010e it's, is deemed valid, is that for
24 a certain period of time?

1
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOSKET: Ah, yes. A
3 2010e is valid for 18 months. So from the date of
4 its acceptance or its approval to the date, the
5 determination is, is, um, valid for an 18-month
6 period.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK. And then what
8 happens at the end of that 18 months if they're not
9 placed?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOSKET: At the end
11 of the 18 months if they're not placed, um, a housing
12 referral, a new 2010e can be produced, um, through
13 the system, so they could, would have to go back into
14 the CAPS system, fill out a new 2010e, because in an
15 18-month period there could be considerable change in
16 many of these clients' lives, um, including, um, new
17 conditions or worsening conditions that would really
18 need to be considered for a new determination.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, so I'm gonna give
20 you a like semi-hypothetical situation. Um, so, ah,
21 a client goes into shelter from the street, um, ah,
22 refuses to fill out a 2010e. Um, exhibits some
23 mental health, um, outward manifestations of mental
24 health diagnoses, um, and, you know, just refuses to
25 fill out a 2010e for a long period of time. Um, the

1
2 shelter staff, um, sees no, ah, way to get that to
3 move forward, sees, you know, has not been able make,
4 to establish trust or establish a working
5 relationship with this client. Um, ah, they remain
6 in shelter. What, what is the, what's, it's, it's
7 clear, I think, to everybody involved that that
8 person should, ah, be in the, in the supportive
9 housing environment. What, what does, what resources
10 are available? What, what, how does, how does the
11 system address a case like that?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KELLY: So in the
13 part of DHS I would say that they work with community
14 partners. If that individual is known to any other
15 entity they would reach out to that entity to try to
16 assist in having a 2010e completed. There are often
17 clients who may not feel comfortable sharing their
18 information with DHS, but they'd be, they'd be known
19 to an advocacy group or a community group that may be
20 working with them. And if that is in the fact the
21 case and we do know that information we can, um,
22 leverage that to get the 2010e completed. In
23 addition to that, we can also provide them with a
24 list of community agencies that also complete the
25 2010e. So that individual may be more comfortable

1
2 going someplace else to have the 2010e completed as
3 opposed to the shelter.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOSKET: But if I may
5 add to that answer, um, Council Member Levin? Ah, at
6 the end of the day it's all a legal consensual
7 process and a client has to consent to share health-
8 protected information with HRA to make the
9 determination. So if the client refuses to and
10 community-based organizations are not able to help
11 convince the client to participate in the 2010e
12 process we cannot take a 2010e for a client without a
13 consent that's been signed for the client with the
14 client indicating it's OK to share their health-
15 related information with us.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Does HRA have, um,
17 social workers who are specifically accredited to
18 work as part of an outreach, um, program or apparatus
19 to, that are social workers, for example, MSWs or,
20 um, that can, that are specifically, um, um, you
21 know, educated and trained to do this, to do that
22 outreach? In other words, not, not just a, not just
23 saying an outreach worker, um, that is contracted
24 with one of the outreach, ah, organizations, not-for-
25 profits, but, or, or an outreach, or a case manager

1
2 at a shelter, but, um, but specifically, you know,
3 higher-lever social workers and the like?

4 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: At
5 this particular time HRA does not have social workers
6 who, um, are assigned to work with DHS clients to
7 commit to, um, perform 2010es. However, as you
8 pointed out, um, the contracted providers do have
9 social workers and that is part of their task to
10 assist, the ones that do have social workers, to
11 assist in completion of the 2010e.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, are, does DHS or
13 HRA or DSS track, um, or have any way of engaging
14 with providers and know, um, how or when or if, um,
15 they are, they're quickly, ah, having 2010e
16 applications completed? For example, if a, you know,
17 a shelter has, um, a 150 clients how does, how's,
18 how's DHS or DSS tracking whether they've completed
19 2010es for all of their eligible clients? Or who's
20 determining also what's the criteria to determine
21 whether or not a 2010e is warranted?

22 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: Are
23 these questions related to, from what I'm
24 understanding, just to make sure I'm clear, that
25 they're related to the DHS process and how they

1 determine if an individual should complete a 2010e
2 and how is that tracked?

3
4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um-hmm.

5 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: So
6 we would have to reach out to our sister agency, DHS,
7 to, um, respond to those questions.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOSKET: But almost
9 everybody that's filling out a 2010e is coming from a
10 DHS, from the DHS system in some way, right?

11 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM:
12 Correct, but I believe that your answer was a little
13 bit more than just where is it coming from just to
14 determine, you know, how many applications are being
15 submitted by each provider and what is the criteria,
16 what are they doing in terms of, um, ensuring that a
17 2010e has been completed. I can say, and Michael
18 Bosket can speak further to this, that, um, HRA
19 [inaudible] has trained DHS providers in regards to
20 the 2010e process and what is required.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK. The reason that
22 I ask is just I, oh, go ahead, go ahead.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOSKET: I'm sorry,
24 if I may...

25 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sure.

1
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOSKET: ...address
3 the latter part of your question where you asked how
4 somebody may know if they're eligible, um, for
5 supportive housing or not. Part of the coordinated
6 assessment survey, that's the beginning of the
7 process and it's, ah, about 20 questions. It doesn't
8 take a long time to complete, maybe 30 minutes.
9 Based on the way that that is, that survey is
10 completed it would indicate whether or not the client
11 might be eligible for supportive housing.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And, and then if it,
13 and then so it would, um, if, if the answers to those
14 questions, um, ah, indicate that, that, ah,
15 supportive housing might be an option for that client
16 then there's a prompt to fill out a 2010e but,
17 because the reason I ask is that, so I've had
18 constituents over the years, um, that have come to me
19 either in my office, either they've been in shelter
20 or they're on the street, um, and, you know, at some
21 point the conversation, we say, OK, have you filled
22 out a 2010e and, you know, there have been many times
23 where the answer has been a what, you know, or no, I
24 haven't filled that out, um, or, you know, we'll ask
25 if you, are you looking to get into supportive

1 housing. Yes, I am. It's permanent housing. Great.
2 Have you filled out a 2010e? No. You know, and so
3 we just don't, it's unclear to us, um, and, and
4 certainly I could, you know, speaking on behalf of my
5 staff who, who work with constituents all the time,
6 um, ah, where, you know, we end up kind of taking
7 them through that process, um, and so it's, I mean,
8 maybe is this before, I don't know how it was done
9 before CAPS, maybe CAPS is, has a, or the coordinated
10 assessment has a, has a, um, ah, you know, at the
11 initial assessment has, has, has, that new system is,
12 is doing a better job of it. I just don't know
13 whether that's the case.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOSKET: Well, one
16 thing I could respond to your question with is upon
17 completion of the survey, um, the results also would
18 show a five-year prior history of 2010e applications.
19 So you could go in and complete an application on
20 Mike Bosket, ah, a survey on Mike Bosket, and upon
21 completion of that survey it would show you the past
22 five-year history of 2010es as well as give you, um,
23 as, um, Chief SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER Holm indicated
24 in her testimony, as well as give you a number of
25 other documents that are needed and required for

1 permanent [inaudible] supportive housing if the
2 client is selected for, um, supportive housing.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK. And that was,
5 and that's under the new system, not the old system?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOSKET: That's
7 correct.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK.

9 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM:
10 Just to reiterate what, um, Deputy Commissioner
11 Bosket stated that this new CAPS that we have has
12 really made it, um, easier for anyone who's assessing
13 an individual to make that determination as to
14 whether that person should complete a 2010e if they
15 are, um, appropriate to complete a 2010e by, by
16 answering the questions in advance. So it doesn't
17 have to be selective, like, well, you know, this
18 person said yes and another person said no. It's
19 really based on how you answer the questions
20 determines whether a 2010e should be completed. So
21 that's the, that's the good thing with this new
22 process that we have.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOSKET: And if I
24 may, if supportive housing is indicated as a possible
25 [inaudible], um, it automatically, ah, will direct

1
2 you to complete the 2010e, and right now with the
3 interfaces and some of the questions that are asked
4 as part of the survey, the interfaces that, um, Ms.
5 Holm described during her testimony, approximately
6 25% of the 2010e application is auto filled, which
7 therefore decreases the amount of time the, whoever
8 is completing the 2010e has to take to complete that
9 application.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Would, would, ah, DHS
11 or HRA, and let me, sorry, would DSS in general, um,
12 support, um, ah, contracting, um, ah, not-for-profits
13 to be able to do outreach to fill out, um, 2010e
14 applications for people, ah, on the street? Um, so
15 in addition to the outreach staff at Breaking Ground
16 and BRC and UCS is there, um, is there, would, is
17 that something that has been entertained or looked
18 into with whether that could be, people could be
19 trained to do that, not-for-profits that are, you
20 know, appropriate and trained to do so?

21 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM:
22 That is something that we could discuss further
23 within the agency.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um-hmm.
25

2 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: We
3 could take it up for discussion.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK. Um, and I guess,
5 I guess my last question before turning it over to my
6 colleagues, um, do, do we know how many, um, ah,
7 2010e applications have been filled out that are
8 still awaiting supportive housing placement? Or how
9 many, how many, ah, of those, of those active ones
10 that, you know, within the 18 months, how many?

11 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: OK,
12 Michael Bosket could respond to that question.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOSKET: Yeah, thank
14 you for that question. Um, so, I, I assume what
15 you're asking as far as the application to have been
16 approved but not yet placed. We call that awaiting
17 placement.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Correct, yeah.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOSKET: Um, at any
20 one time there are usually somewhere in the area of
21 5000 people awaiting placement.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And how many have
23 been placed since NY 1515?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOSKET: I'd have to
25 ask my colleague, Ms. Kelly, to answer that question.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KELLY: Thank you.

3 So as part of, um, 1515, can you all hear me?

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yes.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KELLY: OK, good,
6 sorry. OK, so as part of 1515 just in the 1515
7 initiative we've placed almost 1800 households. So
8 and that, that equates to over 2300 people, because
9 some of these hospital are families with children or
10 adult families. Um, but we also place into, and
11 those are just new units, right, but we also place
12 into re-rentals, which are part of the New York, NY
13 One and Two and Three agreements. We have still some
14 of the New York, NY Three units coming online as well
15 as the ESSHI units. So from around 2017 till now
16 we've placed about 3500 people, just in new units
17 alone, not including the, um, the re-rentals. As,
18 um, Ms. Holm said, since 2014 there have been almost
19 12,000 people placed in supportive housing, um,
20 overall, which would be across...

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK. Including the
22 re-rentals?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KELLY: Yes, exactly.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, OK. Ah, I'll,
25 I'll be following up with more questions, um, after

2 my colleagues. But I will turn it over to my
3 colleagues right now and I think the first, ah,
4 member to have their hand up was, ah, Council Member
5 D. Diaz.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER D. DIAZ: Good
7 afternoon...

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER D. DIAZ: Can you guys
10 hear me?

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yep.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER D. DIAZ: So DHS, a full
13 disclosure, I have spent the last 13 years working
14 within the family shelter system and until December 1
15 I was still working for DHS, and of my biggest, most
16 difficult tasks was the 2010e application when you
17 went from, you transferred over to CAPS. And I
18 shared it to say I want to encourage you to please go
19 back and offer more webinars and more training
20 because as COVID has come upon us getting on the site
21 and off the site was definitely a challenge. Like I,
22 I [inaudible] question in reference to the mental
23 health assessment. For myself, getting the mental
24 health assessment for a client that I would have like
25 identified, it took me at least a month. So I'd like

1
2 to know what the difference between someone in
3 shelter and me working with outside providers and
4 your resources that you identified with the street
5 homeless, which I would find much more difficult to
6 work with.

7 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: I
8 would defer to Michael Bosket, um, to respond to that
9 question.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOSKET: So, and
11 there were a couple of questions in there. I think
12 the first related mostly to training or retraining
13 around the new system because we did, a lot of it was
14 implemented in COVID. Um, we do offer, offer
15 trainings quite frequently, sorry. Um, and, ah, we
16 can get to you a schedule of when trainings or
17 retrainings are held. There's also quite a bit of,
18 ah, information right on the CAPS system that you can
19 review, including guides and, and, um, other items
20 like that. The second part of your question, Council
21 Member Diaz, if I remember, was around the mental
22 health, um, screening.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER D. DIAZ: No, not
24 screening, not the screening, the assessment.

1
2 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: Oh,
3 the assessment, I'm sorry. Um, yes, um, ah, during,
4 um, ah, Chief of Special Services Holm's testimony
5 she discussed one of the enhancements we have
6 recently made to the 2010e in an effort to, um, and
7 recognizing the difficulty of getting the mental
8 health assessment was to, um, ah, expand the level of
9 professionals, so the type of professionals who can,
10 who can complete those assessments, which now
11 includes licensed social workers as well as licensed
12 mental health counselors. Um, and I'm not sure if
13 you're aware of that. Ah, if you are not aware of
14 that it's one effort that we've taken, ah,
15 understanding particularly [inaudible] street
16 homeless that could be very difficult to get the
17 types of professionals we had limited to prior and
18 our hope is by the expansion of these new mental
19 health professionals it will make it easier to get
20 mental health, um, assessments.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER D. DIAZ: OK. And then
22 for my colleagues that have not gone through the
23 process, at least with the, the families, when you go
24 into DHS into [inaudible] at the point of intake
25 families are assessed for alcohol abuse or any

1
2 illness that they may have. So when we get the
3 clients, or when we've gotten a client at the shelter
4 [inaudible] we don't even know till the indicator is
5 there as what services the client may need, whether
6 it just be general, um, Housing Connect or we should
7 reach out to, to other services. I'm not sure if you
8 knew that, but there are systems in place, um, to
9 help guide non-social workers or professionally
10 trained individuals, um, in the mental health
11 services area.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOSKET: Thank you.

13 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM:

14 Thank you.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER D. DIAZ: You're welcome.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: All right. Council

17 Member D. Diaz, if, if you have any further

18 questions, um, I'm not gonna do a clock on the, on

19 the questions, so feel free to ask any more

20 [inaudible]. I don't know if you're muted. But

21 until we hear back from, from Darma I'll turn it over

22 to Council Member Holden for questions.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER D. DIAZ: Oh, I'm sorry, I

24 was muted.

25 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER D. DIAZ: I'm sorry. I'm
3 having tech issues.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: No problem.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER D. DIAZ: As you know, I
6 came in 10 days ago and, um, doing the best I can to,
7 to get it going. So definitely, I definitely have
8 more questions for, for DHS, but I would like the
9 opportunity to get, just get back to them at a later
10 time, OK?

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER D. DIAZ: Being part of
13 the system for 13 years I do walk away with some
14 take-aways that I'd like to see changed and areas of
15 improvement, but being I have this opportunity I
16 think it would be disingenuous if I did not share
17 that only, that some of that was on the boots on the
18 grounds and I worked for over nine days working with
19 DHS staffing at home made my job extremely difficult,
20 no responses, caused for me to lose units for, with
21 landlords that were definitely willing to work with
22 my clients in transitioning from shelter into, into
23 permanency. So please, you know, I'm going to
24 continue to make that plug for staff at home to
25 please be mindful to the emails who called you to

2 coming in because it's hard for us, boots on the
3 ground, to continue to do the work that we're
4 supposed to do if our cohorts are not on board with
5 us.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yep.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER D. DIAZ: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Council
9 Member, thank you. Ah, Council Member Holden.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you, Chair,
11 and thank you, everyone. Thank you, ah,
12 Administration, for the testimony.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And, Bob, just to
14 interrupt, ah, no time limit for, for council member
15 questions.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Oh, thank you.
17 All right. Never heard that before. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: It's only us here,
19 so.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: All right. Um,
21 just, um, you know, I want to go back to, ah, Chair
22 Levin's, ah, question about, um, when a street
23 homeless, ah, is there, you know, how many go
24 directly into supportive housing? Because that is,
25 that seems the major obstacle, the shelter, ah,

1
2 system. Many of the street homeless do not want to
3 go into the shelter, ah, system for, for various
4 reasons. Obviously, maybe some had a bad experience.
5 So they'd rather be on the street. So is there any
6 special consideration for supportive housing for
7 somebody on the street and how long, you know,
8 they've been on the street, the months, the winter
9 months especially, their condition, what, what, what
10 is the priority here? Do they get any special, um,
11 consideration, the street homeless?

12 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: So
13 thank you, thank you for that question. As I stated
14 in the testimony earlier, we do have 200 units that
15 the state provided that we, um, have targeted for
16 street homeless. In addition to that, DHS has a
17 robust street outreach team that works with street
18 homeless and we do understand that some individuals
19 prefer not to enter shelter, and they will work with
20 them and help them to complete the 2010e and when
21 possible move them into a unit if, you know, all of
22 the criteria is met in terms of completing the
23 application and the process involved from getting
24 from street to unit.

25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Right, but, um,
3 and, and I'd like to know the number actually that,
4 you know, so I know you don't have the number now,
5 how many skip the shelter and go directly from street
6 to supportive housing? Um, that's a very, very
7 important, you know, if it's just 15, ah, we need to
8 know if that process is being followed through and if
9 we are accommodating especially the people on the
10 street and especially their conditions. You said
11 there's 200 units set aside? Um, and maybe I missed
12 the answer, but how many are, how much vacancy do we
13 have of those 200?

14 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM:
15 Jennifer Kelly can respond to that question.
16 Jennifer, do you have it?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: Um, if I,
18 can I actually jump in really quickly, sorry, I was
19 trying to unmute myself for a minute, um, and then
20 maybe, ah, Jennifer can jump in on the, the, ah,
21 vacancy piece. Ah, Council Member, in regard to your
22 question I can't break down further than the number
23 I'm gonna provide in terms of how many of these
24 permanent placements were to supportive housing
25 placements. But we do know that a lot of individuals

1
2 who are placed from the street into permanent
3 housing, ah, placements, ah, a great deal of them are
4 into supportive housing. So in Local Law 19, ah, the
5 agency is required to report quarterly on our work.
6 Um, for the full fiscal year of 2020, um, we placed
7 103 clients, um, from the street into permanent
8 housing, and that is, um, ah, one subset of
9 placements that are made from the street. We also
10 have placements into transitional settings and then
11 placements into other settings, um, which include,
12 um, hospital settings, outpatient treatment. Um, so
13 103 for fiscal year 20, um, Local Law 19 is reported
14 quarterly. Um, I thought I'd give you a full fiscal
15 year instead of the first quarter of FY21, ah, but
16 that report was recently submitted to the, to the
17 council.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: So 103 is just
19 for supportive, not, um, medical, not in a
20 hospital...

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: So it's
22 the 103 are permanent, ah, housing placements of our
23 street clients. Um, it does not include hospitals.
24 But that 103 could potentially also include something

1
2 other than supportive housing as a permanent housing
3 placement.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: OK. Just one
5 other question while I have you on. Um, let's talk
6 about Kendra's Law and how many times that was
7 invoked in, ah, ah, on the streets of, of New York
8 City this year. Do you have that number, or you?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: I don't
10 have that number, Council Member.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: OK, but do you
12 know if it's being used to, to, if somebody is in
13 dire need and you want to get them medication. Let's
14 say you, you, ah, recognize mental illness, um, and
15 they need to get some medication, because they're
16 doing various things, obviously, um, that are harmful
17 both to themselves and to the public. Um, can we get
18 that number, because it seems to be I'm not getting,
19 you know, I get different, ah, people telling me they
20 can't get me that number. But can we get, can you
21 follow through and get that number, ah, within...

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: Let me,
23 let me talk to the team and follow up with you.

24

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: OK, thank you.
3 Um, thank you, Chair. Maybe I'll go a second round
4 if you, if you have time.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Oh, OK. Do any
6 other, ah, council members have questions? Please
7 raise your hand if you do. OK. Um, so I'll, I'll
8 continue asking questions here. Um, do we know how
9 many, um, individuals or households, families, um,
10 have, um, have gone more than five years, ah, with a
11 completed 2010e that have not been placed in
12 supportive housing?

13 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: We
14 would have to definitely look at our numbers to get
15 back to you on that. We don't have that information
16 on hand for this testimony.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, if, what would be
18 the reasons for something like to happen?

19 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM:
20 Could be any...

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: In other...

22 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: I'm
23 sorry, go ahead and finish.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Go ahead. Well, I
25 guess my question is, ah, why is it so much harder

1
2 for some people to get placed in housing, in
3 supportive housing than others?

4 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: I
5 believe when Jennifer Kelly, um, previously, um,
6 responded to this question she alluded to it, that
7 there are a number of factors that come into play
8 when someone is referred for supportive housing. The
9 services that they may need, ah, where this, ah, unit
10 is located, is it, ah, something that the client is
11 even interested in or the shelter client is
12 interested in? Is it something that works for both
13 the provider and the shelter, um, resident? So there
14 are a number of reasons why, um, somebody may cycle
15 through and may not absolutely get that first fit,
16 um, when they apply. It could be any various number
17 of reasons.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Is there continuity
19 with a caseworker of any kind? Um, somebody, ah, for
20 example, has 2010e filled out by a, ah, street
21 outreach worker. Um, ah, do they, are they then
22 assigned or, um, through the CAPS system, um, have
23 any continuity of casework, um, other than what's in
24 the system, but, I mean, do they have relationships
25 with outreach workers or other types of staff, um,

1
2 that take them through this process, or are they kind
3 of handed off from one agency or caseworker to
4 another, um, without kind of that, um, relationship?
5 Because I, you know, talking, obviously we're dealing
6 with people with, with, um, ah, with, with mental
7 health diagnoses and that's, you know, that sometimes
8 requires additional level of, um, of continuity of
9 care.

10 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM:

11 Fully appreciate the question, and with the street
12 outreach team for DHS, now we're going into DHS a
13 little bit, so I don't want to get too far into that
14 and speak for DHS, but with the outreach providers
15 they do have continuity generally because a lot of
16 the street homeless they tend to stay in certain
17 areas. So what happens is that the outreach workers
18 do work with them, they're familiar with them, they
19 do follow them and ensure that if a housing
20 application has been submitted that there is that
21 continuity with that actual outreach worker.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, let me ask for a
23 moment here just a somewhere timely question, um, and
24 maybe Deputy Commissioner Drinkwater could speak on
25 behalf of DHS. Um, ah, there's a storm, um, coming

1
2 like in the next couple of days, um, significant
3 storm. Um, this will be the first, ah, large, ah,
4 winter storm during COVID. Um, you know, in the past
5 individuals who were on the street, that would be,
6 you know, and, and we're talking about, you know,
7 people that are, we know are, are continuing to be on
8 the street. This is the wintertime. There are
9 people that will be, you know, we know from doing
10 [inaudible] counts every year, um, that there
11 continue to be people that are on the street during
12 cold weather. Um, but many, if it gets cold enough
13 or the weather is bad enough will go into the subways
14 overnight. That's not an option right now. Um, or
15 they could go into a drop-in center, but, um, I would
16 have concerns about social distancing in drop-in
17 centers right now. I mean, you know, maybe we're
18 addressing that but, ah, I'm not sure how. Um, ah,
19 you know, ah, they would not be, you know, I mean,
20 the hospitals are, are not in any position to be, um,
21 accepting people, um, ah, just because they're
22 outside, um, especially right now. So what's the
23 plan, um, for Wednesday night when we have, you know,
24 a blizzard?

1
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: Thank
3 you for the question. Our teams are certainly
4 preparing, ah, for the, the storm. Um, we do have
5 drop-in centers open, operating at reduced capacity,
6 um, to permit social distancing, um, and we continue
7 to work, um, with our outreach teams in terms of
8 engaging individuals who are in the street. Um, as
9 was reported earlier today, um, you know, we've had a
10 lot of success with the additional safe haven and
11 stabilization beds that we've brought on over the
12 course of this past year, um, and getting folks to
13 accept a placement to come inside to those lower
14 threshold model beds. Um, the storm will, you know,
15 cause challenges, but we also recognize that, um, you
16 know, we have ways to bring people inside. We have
17 locations that we can, can bring them to, um, and,
18 you know, our teams will be out there, um, with an
19 all-hands-on-deck, ah, checking in on individuals who
20 might refuse to come inside and then certainly for
21 those willing to accept to come inside to get them,
22 ah, ah, transferred to an indoor location.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, I mean, how many,
24 how are we social, how are we reducing capacity of, I
25 mean, I think often, at least what I've seen in, in

1
2 years past is on cold weather nights, especially like
3 in Manhattan, um, ah, you know, ah, drop-in centers
4 will be at capacity, um, ah, and if it's, if that
5 capacity is reduced in individual drop-in centers,
6 um, without any of these other options really
7 available, what's the, I mean, how, how is that
8 possible? It couldn't be, you know, because of,
9 we're at capacity normally and the capacity is
10 usually, I don't know, what's, what's, what are we
11 having, ah, drop-in centers at capacity-wise now
12 compared to normal, percentage-wise?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: Um, so
14 the, I'd have to get the exact numbers and I do, I do
15 have those numbers, um, but it's basically operating
16 at 50% capacity for those sites. I mean, there's
17 certain, um, logistical layouts of each individual
18 site that needs to be taken into consideration. Um,
19 the number of repairs...

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But we...

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: ...is
22 reduced, similar to, um, the permanent shelters that
23 we have operated ongoing during COVID. Um, so we
24 just take those chairs sort of offline so they can't
25 be used.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK. But we don't
3 have twice as many drop-in centers like in Manhattan
4 than we normally do, right?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: So we
6 do, we do from last winter have, I believe, one
7 additional drop-in center. Again, I, I can pull the
8 numbers up, um, and then, you know, unlike last
9 winter we have the addition of the over a thousand
10 safe haven and stabilization beds that have been
11 brought on over the course of this year. That's a,
12 you know, really necessary resource, ah, for bringing
13 people inside. So that, you know, sort of...

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: How, how are those
15 capacity, how, how are the additional safe haven and
16 stabilization beds, what capacity were they at last
17 night, for example?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: Ah, I
19 don't [inaudible].

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Or in the last
21 couple, that the last night that you have data for?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: Sure.
23 I'd have to get back to you on that. I don't have
24 that.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK. Um, is there a,
3 is, is that flexible? Can we add additional safe
4 haven, or, or safe haven might be more difficult.
5 Can we add stabilization beds, um, in the next 48
6 hours, ah, to handle, like flex beds, to handle an
7 additional, ah, demand?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: I mean,
9 we believe, looking at our capacity right now, that
10 we have the capacity necessary to meet the demand.
11 Um, certainly, you know, if, if we need to discuss
12 what our options are for flex beds to address a
13 winter storm, um, that's something that the team can
14 respond to.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So what then would be
16 the case if you're, if you're maxed out on your, on
17 your, um, drop-in center beds and you're maxed out on
18 your existing safe haven and stabilization beds?
19 What's, what is the, what's the, the following
20 contingency plan?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: So we
22 continue to have placements in traditional shelters,
23 so folks could come inside and be placed in a
24 traditional shelter bed.

25 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: A congregate shelter?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: Well,
3 so, a congregate shelter that's either operating at
4 half capacity under COVID, as they have been, or, ah,
5 they would be placed in a hotel if they have, if
6 they, so when you're a single adult you get your
7 shelter assignment and that shelter assignment is
8 good for a year. If this is a new individual coming
9 into the system they would come in through 30th
10 Street and then get signed, ah, get assigned to an
11 assessment shelter, um, as we would any client.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I thought that people
13 weren't, I thought we were not having intakes through
14 30th Street right now.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: So
16 that...

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Are you having...

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: I mean,
19 we're still utilizing 30th Street. If a client is
20 new to DHS and coming indoors, um, we still have
21 that, that centralized intake for clients to come
22 into the system.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And what capacity is
24 the, is the assessment center at?
25

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: So I,
3 ah, across the system right now I'm not prepared to
4 answer questions on capacity. I'm happy to get back
5 to you after the hearing and specific questions that
6 you might have in respect to the capacity as it
7 relates to the winter storm. But I'm not...

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK, yeah...

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER:
10 [inaudible]...

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Maybe in the next 48
12 hours we should really like have a, you know, a
13 little bit more granular conversation when we're
14 offline about what the, the details are.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: Yeah, I,
16 and just to be clear, it's not that those
17 conversations aren't happening. I just didn't
18 prepare for those conversations...

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: ...here
21 at the hearing. But we're happy to get...

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Understood, yeah.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: ...get
24 back [inaudible].

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah, it's not the
3 topic of the hearing.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: Yeah.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Got it. Ah, I'm
6 going to turn it back over to Council Member Holden.
7 Bob, you're on mute.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: OK, is that good?

9 UNIDENTIFIED: Yes.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: All right, thank
11 you. Um, Commissioner Drinkwater, in engagements
12 with street home, homeless, with the outreach, um,
13 maybe, maybe this was answered, I'm sorry, because I
14 was in and out. What is the success rate in getting
15 the homeless off the street? What percentage, ah,
16 is, are the teams, um, successful in getting, um,
17 individuals off the street? Do we have that?

18 Commissioner Drinkwater, is she still there? Oh.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: Sorry
20 about that. I, I had muted my mic. Um, so as we've
21 talked about, you know, each, each case and each
22 individual is different. Um, we, I don't have the
23 percentage numbers, but in Local Law 19 we speak
24 about the total number of engagements that happen
25 over the course of the fiscal year. So, for example,

1
2 in fiscal year 20 there were 28,023 engagements to
3 our street homeless population. Um, over the course
4 of that same year the total number of clients placed,
5 um, was 2597. So, you know, the sort of multiple
6 interactions that our teams have with individuals who
7 are experiencing homelessness on the street, it might
8 not be that first interaction, it might not be the
9 second interaction, but our teams continue to go out
10 with persistence and compassion to engage the
11 clients, to build trust, and to really work with
12 them, um, to find the resource to bring them inside.
13 Um, so, again, the 28,000 is the total number of
14 engagements and from that, um, 2597 clients were
15 placed into a variety of options. So that could be a
16 permanent housing option, that could be a
17 transitional placement, or that could be a placement
18 into other settings, such as a hospital or an
19 outpatient, ah, placement.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: And how many not-
21 for-profits are doing outreach on the street? Do we
22 have a number on that?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: So we
24 have, ah, Breaking Ground and BRC, as well as the
25 Manhattan Outreach Consortium, ah, who are doing

1
2 outreach across the boroughs, and then Project
3 Hospitality in Staten Island as well.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: All right.

5 Because, you know, if we can get, um, a success rate
6 on the not-for-profits we can evaluate their
7 performance. Do you keep track of that? Um, if, if
8 some, if one not-for-profit is doing much better than
9 the other, um, because of, of maybe the way they, um,
10 do the outreach, or the way they talk to the street
11 homeless?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: Sure, I
13 mean, we work with our client, or excuse me, our
14 providers, um, you know, they are contracted to do
15 this work, um, and we work to ensure that, you know,
16 there are best practices across different providers,
17 um, but also recognize that there can be, ah, you
18 know, differences of experience depending on the
19 clients that a particular provider is working with,
20 um, and so, you know, can certainly talk more about
21 that, um, with you. But our, our contracted
22 providers do have, ah, the standards of the contract,
23 ah, that we work with them on.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: All right. One
25 other question. There was a newspaper report earlier

1 this month that said nearly 2500 complaints to 311,
2 um, about street homeless desperately needing help or
3 causing problems have been closed without any action
4 by obviously the police, who no longer have
5 jurisdiction. Um, could you, could you speak to that
6 as to, ah, why 2500 complaints went unanswered?
7

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: Um, so
9 I, I can't speak to the NYPD's complaints. Um, when
10 there are calls to 311 and directed to our teams, our
11 outreach teams work to go out, um, and engage with
12 clients, um, who, you know, the report from 311 has
13 come in on. Um, there are instances, ah, that I know
14 of where, you know, teams will go out, an individual
15 might move, um, but we do follow up, um, and work to
16 close out those cases when, you know, our teams have
17 gone out.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: But, but, just
19 tell me, take me through the process. If somebody
20 calls 911, let's say, and it goes to the police for
21 some reason when it shouldn't, um, does that, do the
22 police connect with our office or, or someone who can
23 do the outreach or not-for-profit directly through
24 311 or 911? Ah, or is it, are they 2500 complaints,
25 according to this article, were lost.

1
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: Right,
3 so I, I don't know the details of, of PD in terms of
4 closing those complaints out or not. Um, if, if
5 there are calls, as I understand it, to, to 911, that
6 are, ah, ah, a health or safety emergency, um, those
7 are routed to, ah, the appropriate, ah, agency, so
8 EMS, FDNY, NYPD. Um, for individuals experiencing
9 homelessness and a homeless outreach, ah, inquiry
10 coming in to 311 those are directed to our teams, our
11 teams are dispatched, and work to engage the
12 individual, um, and again offer them services. They
13 might be known to our team. They might not be known
14 to our team. In either event we work to establish
15 that trust and build that relationship to ultimately
16 bring them inside.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: All right,
18 because, you know, according to the article, again,
19 you know, I'm just reading the article. It said, um,
20 that a de Blasio spokesperson said, ah, they didn't
21 deny that the complaints went unaddressed and, um,
22 so, you know, and these are both 911 and 311. So we
23 just really need to investigate if calls about, ah,
24 homeless, ah, situations causing either harm to
25 themselves or others, if they're not being addressed

1
2 then we need a better communication than, um, I, I
3 think we have to look into that and find out did
4 those calls go 'cause the administration is not
5 denying that some calls went unaddressed. Ah, so we
6 need to find out is there a little gap here in the
7 reporting system.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: I
9 appreciate that. Thank you.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you. Thank
11 you, Chair.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Council
13 Member. Um, so I'm just gonna, ah, I'll be jumping
14 around to make sure I'm covering the topics I need to
15 be covering, um, ah, before we let you all go. Oh,
16 Council Member Lander has a question [inaudible].

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you very
18 much, Chair. I really appreciate your convening this
19 hearing and just all the leadership that you have
20 shown in pushing our council to do better by homeless
21 folks and those who need supportive, ah, and
22 affordable housing, and thank you to the
23 administration for being here. Um, I had to, to jump
24 off for a minute so it's possible that this got
25 addressed, but if it didn't I do want to ask about

1
2 it. Um, and that is, um, thinking about the effort
3 to, um, acquire and convert some of the hotels, ah,
4 that are, you know, in distress at this time to be
5 supportive housing for the future. Now obviously
6 that's a separate question, ah, from the
7 conversations we've had in the past, some of which
8 got contentious about deploying hotels more
9 immediately. I'm, I'm leaving that aside for a
10 minute, obviously, but, you know, but we all know
11 that including some of the hotels that are being used
12 currently for homeless folks but also there's just a
13 much broader set of hotels in distress at this time.
14 I think we know that the industry, the hotel
15 industry, is going to be slow in recovery and coming
16 back as tourism is overall and we are going to need a
17 lot more units of supportive housing than we have and
18 so that's not going to get anybody a supportive
19 housing unit, you know, tonight or next month. But
20 it does seem like there is an opportunity here to
21 significantly increase the footprint of supportive,
22 ah, housing that we have in New York City that we
23 won't have if we can't move quickly, even though
24 that's gonna require like long-term planning and more
25 money that's on the table at a time when resources

1
2 are scarce. Um, but if we're serious about ending
3 homelessness and about scaling up the, the, and, you
4 know, we'll need to work with the state, obviously
5 operating resources would be needed in addition to
6 capital. You know, we, we could have a whole hearing
7 on this topic. But I guess I at least want to make
8 sure we know, you know, ah, I think Vicky Been had,
9 Deputy Mayor Been, had talked about this back in the
10 spring, but I haven't seen that much on it recently
11 and so I just want to know, um, you know, is there a
12 planning or a meaningful effort underway not just to
13 do, you know, one or two hotels which, which, which
14 would be good with individual providers, but to
15 really use this moment to significantly scale up our
16 supportive housing footprint.

17 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: So
18 I would defer that question to Emily Lehman from HPD,
19 who may be able to answer about building capacity and
20 the work we've done on that on the part of HPD.

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER LEHMAN: Sure,
22 thank you for the question. Um, so we are always
23 looking for opportunities to expand our toolbox to
24 create more affordable and supportive housing. And
25 we do recognize that the hospitality and hotel

1 industry have been hit particularly hard by COVID,
2 um, so we are certainly looking into the viability
3 of, um, helping to acquire and convert hotels to
4 housing. Um, you know, we are, we have received a
5 number of proposals and are reviewing them on a case-
6 by-case basis. Um, each site has a different set of
7 circumstances, um, that we're evaluating for
8 viability. Um, so far most of the proposals we've
9 seen have required a substantial amount of investment
10 of city resources and so we are, are evaluating that,
11 um, [inaudible].

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Well, let me ask
14 you a question about that because I mean of course
15 they'll take significant resources and I get that a
16 lot of the hotels, especially those that might be in
17 distress would, would be the ones that would need
18 more work and, you know, they'll have a bathroom but
19 they might not have a kitchen, so there's a whole
20 range of issues that I could understand, um, and
21 obviously at the moment if we were gonna
22 substantially grow the pipeline, like, one we don't
23 have the capital in the budget to do it. We've got
24 folks that have been waiting to build supportive
25 housing in the pipeline already and I don't want them

1
2 getting bumped, um, but I guess I think it is worth
3 looking at from a slightly different angle, which is
4 if we know we need a lot more supportive housing
5 maybe we should develop like an acquisition approach,
6 um, that doesn't try to underwrite each deal now in
7 the way that you would that isn't gonna take money
8 that was needed to renovate a different, you know,
9 supportive housing, I mean, there's obviously a
10 threshold question, can they be done at scale in a
11 way that's more cost effective over the long term
12 than like building from the ground up or taking a
13 different development approach? But it seems to be
14 worth asking that question. I guess what I want to
15 know is I want an analysis is this an opportunity
16 such that if we miss it we're gonna have missed the
17 opportunity to do a significant amount of supportive
18 housing and if it is that opportunity what would it
19 look like to put additional dollars in for rapid
20 acquisition even if we might not be able to do the
21 renovation, ah, you know, even if the renovation
22 would need to be on a slower timeline and with
23 additional resources.

24 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER LEHMAN: Yeah,
25 that is something that we are definitely looking

1 into. Um, you know, we've seen a variety of
2 proposals, um, proposing different things, some
3 proposing, um, acquisitions and then holding the
4 site, um, for a period of time while we wait for the
5 capital availability, others that might be available
6 more immediately with, um, limited to no, um, capital
7 work. Um, so we're still evaluating, um, as they
8 [inaudible].
9

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: OK, and I won't
11 take more time here, but if I could just ask if you
12 would come back to us, like I think this is one where
13 we would, you know, and, and, and this could be with,
14 with the chair here in General Welfare, obviously
15 this is a housing issue, ah, as well. But I just,
16 ah, you know, this is one that I, I think could
17 easily slip because there's so many more urgent
18 issues. I mean, the chair is rightly focused on
19 what's happening tonight as the snow and the cold hit
20 and that is urgent, to save people's lives tonight.
21 So you could see why we would miss the longer-term
22 opportunity and I just want to make sure we as the
23 council try to act as a, you know, a, a vehicle of
24 oversight to make sure we're also paying attention to
25 what we need for the longer term. So let me just

1
2 request that if HPD and the administration be willing
3 at a future point to brief the council, ah, on this,
4 we don't need to have a whole hearing on it although
5 we could, but we would love to stay in the loop and
6 understand how you guys are thinking about it and,
7 you know, that's gonna be a relevant capital budget
8 issue as we start to gear up for, um, for next year's
9 budget as well, so.

10 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER LEHMAN: Sure,
11 we'd be happy to.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you very
13 much. Ah, thank you, Chair, for staying focused on
14 what matters in our city.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,
16 Council Member Lander. Um, OK, ah, I will be, ah,
17 hopping around a little bit here. Um, first one to
18 ask, there's a, um, ah, [inaudible] I just want to
19 make sure we're, we're clear on, um, ah, we're
20 hearing that HRA is not allowing electronic signature
21 for supportive housing consents, um, which is the,
22 the document that is required to start a supportive
23 housing application. Um, I know that, um, some
24 organizations are having challenges because they're
25

1 finding it difficult to meet their clients in person.

2 Um, do you know if that's the case?

3 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM:

4 Michael Bosket can respond to that question.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOSKET: Sorry, I was
6 muted. Ah, I'm actually conferring right now with
7 the director of the unit to see if we are allowing
8 electronic signatures or not. I should hear back
9 momentarily. I'm sorry for the delay, um, ah, he's
10 raising his hand. If we could unmute Craig
11 [inaudible] he could actually address that question
12 better than I can.

13 CRAIG [INAUDIBLE]: Yah, thank you for
14 the question. Um, so, ah, we are able to accept, ah,
15 electronic, our, what our, um, what our understanding
16 is is that there is software that allows people to
17 electronically sign documents, such as the consent.
18 We need the client's signature on the consent in
19 order to have the client's legal consent in order to
20 proceed with the application. Um, so I want to make
21 sure we're being very clear about what is being
22 reported. If they're not able to get an electronic
23 signature on our document then they would need a wet
24 signature on the document in order to make it a legal
25

1 document. But, you know, from our legal we were that
2 we do need the client's signature on the consent
3 form. So I think that, um, I hope that clarifies,
4 you know, what, um, you know, when the issue was
5 brought up to us, you know, what is the option here.
6 So if the, say the provider who is working with the
7 client has the ability to, um, obtain an electronic
8 signature on the consent from the client, then that
9 would be a legal consent from the client in order for
10 us to proceed with the application.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I'm sorry, I didn't,
13 sorry, under what circumstances then are, is a, is a,
14 a handwritten signature required?

15 CRAIG [INAUDIBLE]: If they're not able
16 to, ah, obtain an electronic signature on the
17 document then they would actually need to client's
18 signature on the consent form.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK, but one or the
20 other is sufficient, so if they can, if they can get
21 an electronic signature that's sufficient?

22 CRAIG [INAUDIBLE]: That is sufficient.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK. Um, all right, I
24 think that, ah, we'll, we'll try to make that, ah,
25 make sure that that's the case in practice and,

1
2 'cause we were hearing from providers that there were
3 some challenges, um, around, um, around getting, ah,
4 having electronic signatures, ah, accepted, so.

5 CRAIG [INAUDIBLE]: Yeah, we were getting
6 reports that what they wanted was a waiver on getting
7 any signature on the consent form, which we could
8 not...

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK.

10 CRAIG [INAUDIBLE]: ...grant.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sure, understood,
12 yeah.

13 CRAIG [INAUDIBLE]: But if you have, ah,
14 like a DocuSign or something like that then you would
15 be able to obtain a signature from the client, um,
16 without a wet signature.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK, great. That's
18 great to hear. OK, thank you. Um, ah, OK, so these
19 are going to be kind of general questions now. Um,
20 do we have a chart that shows, um, the number for
21 just NYC 1515, so just the city program, the number
22 of congregate units and the number of scatter site
23 units respectively that have been funded, funded, in
24 the pipeline, and sited, and built, um, for each of
25 those, um, ah, for each of those types of housing and

2 whether, and how that tracks, um, compared to the
3 annual or semiannual goals that the administration
4 has set? Is there any, is, does that exist?

5 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM:

6 Just to be clear, are you referring to New York City
7 1515? Is that what?

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Correct.

9 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM:

10 Correct.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: That's [inaudible].

12 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: So,

13 yes, we did provide those numbers in testimony
14 and...

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK.

16 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: And

17 in that we indicated that how many has been awarded,
18 how many, um, are built, how many are in the
19 pipeline, and we are at least one-third towards the
20 way of meeting that goal.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK.

22 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: But

23 you're asking for this in a chart form?
24
25

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Ah, that, we could
3 probably, using the data we'll, we'll see how we can
4 work that...

5 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: OK.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...together and, um,
7 and see if, if we need any additional information.

8 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: OK,
9 great.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, in the, in the
11 testimony, I'm sorry, that was broken down by scatter
12 site and congregate?

13 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: We
14 did, yes, we talked about...

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK.

16 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: I
17 believe we did, but if it's not there just let us
18 know and we will, you know...

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sure.

20 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: ...
21 provide it accordingly. But I believe it was.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Ah, Ms. [inaudible]
23 I, I, um, ah, I believe you weren't sworn in
24 actually, so our, our, the counsel for our committee
25 actually needs to retroactively swear you in.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do you affirm to tell
3 the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth
4 before this committee and to respond honestly to
5 council member questions?

6 CRAIG [INAUDIBLE]: I do.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Mr.
8 [inaudible].

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. Um, ah,
10 how many, ah, FY, ah, sorry, how many New York City
11 1515, ah, congregate units have, have closed on
12 financing in FY20 so far? Or, I'm sorry, we're in
13 21, in FY20.

14 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: I
15 would defer to Emily Lehman in terms of financing to
16 respond to that question from HPD, she's from HPD.

17 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER LEHMAN: Hi. Um,
18 so for fiscal year 20, which ended, um, at the end of
19 June, um, HPD financed over 600 units of congregate
20 supportive housing. Um, this includes units funded
21 through the NYC 1515 program, state and federal
22 resources, um, as well as the preservation of
23 existing supportive housing. Um, it's important to
24 note that due to the impacts of COVID we did
25 experience a slowdown in production, um, in the

2 second half of FY20. Um, but we're in the middle of
3 an extremely ambitious closing season right now. Um,
4 and so while those units will count towards fiscal
5 year 21, we look forward to sharing those numbers
6 with you in the new year.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

8 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: And
9 Chair Levin, just going back to your previous
10 question, through October 2020 we have awarded 5306
11 1515 units to providers, including 1255 scatter site
12 and 4051 congregate.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK. Thank you. Um,
14 so moving on to, um, a couple of questions around
15 CAPS. Um, we have heard stories from advocates
16 previously that supporting, this is going back to
17 our, I don't know if, um, I think, Annette, you were
18 at our last hearing several years ago, um, that was
19 on site, um, at the Schermerhorn.

20 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM:
21 Yes.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, do we, I remember
23 hearing a lot of, ah, stories then about applicants
24 who are rejected for reasons that appear to go
25 against the spirit of supportive housing, for

1
2 example, rejections because somebody was intoxicated
3 or showing symptoms, or didn't have quote unquote
4 insight into their illness, or showed up to the
5 interview in pajamas, or things of that sort. Um,
6 how does HRA, I mean, obviously these, you know, the
7 purpose of supportive housing, um, and, um, ah, is,
8 is to provide housing services to people, um,
9 experiencing mental health issues. So, um, how are
10 we making sure that, um, ah, providers aren't just
11 rejected because a client might be seen as difficult
12 to serve and how has the standardized vulnerability
13 index impacted this issue?

14 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM:

15 Well, thank you for that question. We have worked
16 tremendously since that last hearing based on, you
17 know, what we heard from providers, from advocates,
18 in regards to rejection of clients for supportive
19 housing. Um, and the reasons for those rejections,
20 as you pointed out, poor insight. What did that
21 actually mean? So Michael Bosket and his team worked
22 collectively as they rolled out CAPS and the SVA to
23 address all of those concerns and I will let Michael,
24 um, respond further.

25

1 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOSKET: I'm sorry,
2
3 Council Member. Could you repeat the question?

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Just, ah, how, how
5 does HRA ensure that providers aren't just rejecting
6 clients because they might be seen as difficult to
7 serve and how has the standardized vulnerability
8 index impacted this issue?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOSKET: Um, actually
10 the first part of the question I'm gonna defer to,
11 um, ah, Commissioner Kelly. But I'll answer the, um,
12 the section related to the Standardized Vulnerability
13 Assessment. So the Standardized Vulnerability
14 Assessment, um, is a tool that uses Medicaid
15 utilization, functional limitations, touches by
16 systems, um, as well as other indicators that, um,
17 ah, Special Chief, ah, Holms had her in her
18 testimony. Um, that SVA, as we called it, ends up
19 with an index of a high, medium, or low in terms of
20 the individual's vulnerability for continued chronic
21 homelessness. So we believe that those clients who,
22 ah, all score a high, as an example, all have equal,
23 um, vulnerability in terms of, ah, remaining
24 chronically homeless and if we're using that as a
25 tool to sort of leverage the playing field, all of

1 the clients who score a similar vulnerability
2 assessment would be essentially in similar
3 situations. And I'll ask, ah, Ms., Ms. Kelly to
4 address the referral process.
5

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KELLY: Thank you,
7 thank you, Michael, thank you, Council Member. So
8 as, as Ms. Holm stated we, um, we are looking at this
9 very closely. We have been looking at this very
10 closely, and we have implemented many changes. Um,
11 as part of 1515 we're working very close partnership
12 with the, um, New York City Department of Health and
13 Mental Hygiene, so, um, you know, when they, they
14 review all interview results at this point. So if,
15 if anything comes in that, that looks like it, it
16 needs some further investigation or clarification
17 they will step in and do that. So, um, you know,
18 that, that's just part of process. My colleague,
19 Gail, is here and, and we send them all directly to
20 her. She sees them all. Um, in addition, we have
21 also made a lot of changes in our interview practices
22 that I think are, are geared more towards really a
23 client-centered approach on this. We are, um, you
24 know, since COVID really is why we implemented this,
25 but we're intending to move it forward. We have

1
2 virtual interviews which enable clients to have, I
3 think, their support in their home shelter or with
4 their case manager near them. I think it's less
5 anxiety producing. We're seeing less no-shows. So
6 these are all things that we're trying to do to, you
7 know, lessen client barriers to housing, recognizing
8 that this is a vital resource for many.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Is DSS able through
10 CAPS to identify individuals who have been rejected
11 frequently, um, from units?

12 UNIDENTIFIED: Yes, they can.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I think I've asked
14 this before. OK.

15 UNIDENTIFIED: Yes, they can.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, what, what is
17 then, what type of, oh, Michael Bosket is looking to
18 speak to that as well.

19 UNIDENTIFIED: Oh.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOSKET: I just want
21 to, um, refresh that I had responded to a question
22 earlier about reporting out of CAPS. The system is
23 relatively new, only implemented on the 26th of
24 October. Um, and so the intent is that we would be
25

1
2 able to produce reports like that, but it may be a
3 while until we can.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK. Um, what kind of
5 assistance is offered to, to, um, the individuals if
6 they're, if CAPS is identifying them as being
7 frequently rejected?

8 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: So
9 that again would go to, um, Deputy Commissioner
10 Jennifer Kelly's area in terms of ensuring that we
11 are making referrals for these individuals and have,
12 and provide them with every opportunity to, um,
13 interview for units that they would be appropriate
14 for, or suited for. So what we do try to do is
15 ensure that referrals are made and we follow up with
16 those referrals to ensure that any rejection, if they
17 are rejected, are appropriate and, again, as Jennifer
18 spoke earlier, they do go over to DOHMH and Gail
19 Wolsk's area reviews them and if there is any concern
20 about a provider then they will, um, reach out to
21 them.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK. I mean, that's
23 something I think would be, that would be in the area
24 where I think that we would be, ah, it would be
25 helpful to have kind of, what, what's the, um,

1
2 feedback, um, mechanism for, ah, HRA and DSS to hear
3 from providers, advocates, um, ah, on challenges that
4 they are seeing within the system? Is there like an
5 ongoing working group with providers and advocates,
6 like supportive housing? Um, just so that there's a
7 kind of, ah, means or mechanism to, um, get feedback
8 if, if you're, if things aren't necessarily going the
9 way that they're supposed to be going?

10 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: So
11 as, um, Deputy Commissioner Bosket point out, the
12 system is fairly new. When we rolled it we have been
13 in, um, constant communication with the providers.
14 Um, I will let him speak further to any outreach that
15 we've had with them and the plan for continued
16 outreach.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOSKET: So we do
18 have a CAPS committee that consists of community
19 members and, um, COC and, and other city agencies
20 where we can discuss these things and address the,
21 and, and talk about these topics.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK, do you have any
23 like, give me like, ah, like, I want to say like
24 adversarial perspectives in that, in that group, like
25

1
2 people that are like, you know, willing to poke the
3 agency a little bit?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOSKET: Ah, as I
5 said, there are community-based members who are in
6 that group.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um-hmm. OK.
8 Because, you know, sometimes we just, we'll hear from
9 advocates that are working, you know, on the ground
10 with clients that might not be [inaudible] housing
11 providers. You know, they, they may be groups that
12 are kind of like working with, with, ah, individual
13 clients, ah, you know, ah, it's always good to have
14 like a little bit of, um, you know, friction. You
15 know, my, my dad always that like the friction is
16 what makes the pearl, you know, a pearl. You know,
17 it's the grain of sand, it's that annoying grain of
18 sand. So I would encourage you to include that grain
19 of sand in, in your process to make sure that you're
20 getting, um, that perspective.

21 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: We
22 do hear from providers. Um, we do hear from some of
23 them who have challenges and have issues, and have
24 concerns about the system. They do reach to us. Um,
25 we do take what they say, um, their concerns

1
2 seriously. We do work with them to assist them with
3 individual clients and some of them, as you say, are
4 on the ground. So we do hear from them and we, as I
5 stated, we really do listen to them and that friction
6 is helpful. I would agree with you with that,
7 because it helps us to look at it from a different
8 angle.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. Um, can,
10 um, we've heard from advocates that they see
11 different populations being disproportionately, um,
12 rejected for, um, for reasons that shouldn't, that
13 are not having to do with their disability, um, ah,
14 they're not only, sorry, not only have to do with
15 their disability but also their age, gender, income
16 status. Um, how, what kind of quality control does
17 HRA have to ensure that there's no discrimination
18 against, um, gender, income, or age?

19 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: So
20 as Jennifer Kelly, um, alluded to earlier, there are
21 a variety of reasons why an individual could be
22 rejected for supportive housing, and there are also
23 different funding streams. So depending on the
24 funding streams the income comes into play. Again,
25 when we are looking at rejections we do send those

1
2 rejections over to DOHMH so that they can look at
3 these rejections and determine if there's any trends
4 or anything that needs to be addressed with a
5 provider. Um, Gail Wolsk could, um, elaborate
6 further.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: If we could, OK, go
8 ahead.

9 SENIOR DIRECTOR WOLSK: Um, that's a
10 great question. So as Jennifer and Annette said,
11 any, we receive the manifest from all of the
12 interviews and if we see any trends, if providers are
13 not accepting a tenant who meets the eligibility
14 criteria and is able to live safely independently we
15 follow up with that provider and request that they
16 re-interview. Sometimes there are times when the
17 room is already rented so the tenant may have to
18 wait, the applicant may have to wait for the next
19 opening. But providers are expected to accept all
20 tenants if the room, as Jennifer said, there's three
21 applicants for each room, so they may have to wait
22 for the next room. So not being accepted for a room
23 is not a denial always. It may mean that there's a
24 different applicant who's accepted for this and then
25 they can re-interview or just be accepted on a

1 waiting list for the next. But all of those are
2 reviewed by DOHMH and providers are asked to re-
3 interview or just be accepted on a waiting list for
4 the next. But all of those are reviewed by DOHMH and
5 providers are asked to re-interview anybody who meets
6 the criteria and is able to live safely.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, thank you very
9 much, ah, um. Ah, I want to ask about, ah, ah, um,
10 evictions and, um, or discharges from supportive
11 housing. What, um, what are the protections that
12 clients have, ah, from being evicted, um, from
13 supportive housing?

14 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM:
15 First of all, um, supportive housing is permanent
16 housing. I would just like to point that out. So,
17 you know, I know sometimes there's misinformation in
18 the community that they, that community, um,
19 residents may think that, that supportive housing is
20 shelter or some sort of temporary housing. It is
21 permanent housing and as such anyone who is in
22 supportive housing is afforded the same rights as any
23 other tenant in New York City. And on, and in
24 regards to supportive housing we would expect our
25 providers to work with individuals who are having

1
2 issues either paying rent, behavioral issues, any
3 other type of substance use issues, any other type of
4 issues that they may have, the supportive housing
5 providers should be working with that individual to
6 address, um, the concerns. This is why it is called
7 supportive housing and there's a robust, um, suite of
8 services that are available to them, and before they
9 could even consider, um, pursuing eviction they would
10 have to reach out to DOHMH, HRA, to say what have you
11 done to work with this individual to maintain them
12 because the goal is not [inaudible] but to remain in
13 some sort of independent housing that can provide
14 them with the services that they need. Gail, would
15 you like to elaborate further?

16 SENIOR DIRECTOR WOLSK: Ah, the only
17 thing I'd like to add is that even if a provider is
18 taking somebody through housing court they still must
19 continue to attempt to reach out, engage that tenant,
20 and try to help that tenant address the issues so
21 that they can stay in housing even if there's a
22 situation where it has gotten to housing court. So
23 services are continuous until that tenant is no
24 longer living in that apartment. So even if there's

25

1 that situation is very important to be aware the
2 provider is still serving that tenant.

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, do, does, ah, do
4 either agencies, ah, track the number of evictions
5 that, ah, occur out of supportive housing every year?
6

7 SENIOR DIRECTOR WOLSK: We don't track...

8 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM:
9 [inaudible] have, I'm sorry, Gail, go ahead.

10 SENIOR DIRECTOR WOLSK: I'm sorry, we
11 don't track that information.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK. Um, so do we
13 have any idea of how much it, how often it happens or
14 the number of instances per year?

15 SENIOR DIRECTOR WOLSK: We can try to get
16 that data and get that back to you.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK. Um, ah, I lost
18 my train of thought for a second. Um, oh, with
19 rights that, um, that people have, um, I mean, there
20 are different rights that tenants enjoy, um, in
21 different types of housing in New York so, um, ah,
22 do, do residents that have supportive housing have
23 the same rights as like a rent-stabilized tenant or
24 an non-rent-stabilized tenant? Because like a rent-
25 stabilized tenant has, um, you know, cannot be

1
2 evicted, you know, has, it's a much higher bar to
3 evict a, ah, a rent-stabilized tenant, um, um, from
4 housing in New York. Do we, I mean, is there, I, I
5 think this is one of the reasons why, um, the bill of
6 rights is something that we [inaudible] look at is,
7 um, making sure that tenants know what their rights
8 are under, under New York City housing law. And I
9 guess one other follow-up question, that would be for
10 scatter sites, do they have, are they the tenant of,
11 of record? Do they have rights to, ah, as, for
12 instance, like a rent-stabilized tenant or is the
13 agency that is the tenant of record?

14 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: So
15 in regards to the second question, I will start with
16 that one first. The lease is in the name of the
17 agency who leased the name for a scatter site and in
18 that particular case, um, the stabilization rules do
19 not apply because it's in the name of agency. Um, in
20 regards to the first part of the question, could you
21 repeat that?

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Just whether they
23 enjoy the rights of rent-stabilized tenants or, or
24 non-rent-stabilized tenants, because those, those
25 rights are different under [inaudible] law?

1
2 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: I,
3 I'm not familiar with that. Gail, do you know the
4 answer to that?

5 SENIOR DIRECTOR WOLSK: Ah, I, I believe
6 that it would depend on the funding for the building.
7 It may be different in each building. But every
8 tenant has full tenant rights, be they in scatter
9 site or in a single site building. Um, so I, we may
10 have tenants...

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah.

12 SENIOR DIRECTOR WOLSK: ...who are under
13 rent stabilization, but that would be, I think,
14 specific to each building.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, OK, well, these
16 are some questions I think we maybe have to dig in a
17 little bit further on...

18 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM: OK.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Because I just want
20 to, I want to make sure like, you know, ah, what the
21 rights, like what their rights are. Um, ah, it's,
22 again, if you're a rent-stabilized tenant in New York
23 City, um, your rights are much more extensive, um,
24 than a non-rent-stabilized tenant. That's across the
25 board. Um, ah, I just want to ask a couple more

1 questions about the bills and then I'll let you all
2 go. Um, I'm, I'm a little confused by the testimony
3 on, um, on the, on the Intro 2176, ah, having to do
4 with the tenants' bill of rights. What specifically
5 are the concerns of the administration? Um, I think,
6 um, ah, ah, Officer Holm, you mentioned that in your
7 testimony that there were some concerns around, ah,
8 different jurisdictions or, um?

10 CHIEF SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICER HOLM:

11 Correct. I, um, will defer to Erin Drinkwater to
12 respond in regards to the bills.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: Thanks,
15 yeah, so one of the concerns was as written, um, we
16 believe this would set up a different standard
17 between those units administered, ah, through the
18 state's ESSHI program as compared to those, um, ah,
19 administered by, ah, New York City. Ah, we would be
20 interested in exploring opportunities to potentially,
21 ah, get something passed at the state level so that
22 way all, all units would be covered as opposed to
23 just a subset of them. Um, we also want to make sure
24 that the information that's being shared, ah, with
25 each of the tenants, ah, is information, um, that

1
2 does not end up in a, you know, voluminous catalog,
3 ah, that's not, you know, easily acquired. Um, some
4 of that information is already, ah, readily
5 available, ah, in other areas. Um, and so we want to
6 work to strike a balance between, ah, providing what
7 is I think very helpful and being transparent and
8 making sure that tenants have information, um, about,
9 ah, their unit. Um, also balancing that with
10 concerns around privacy, places where information is
11 already posted, ah, under, you know, DOH, DOHMH, or
12 HPD, ah, requirements as well. Oh, also just, if I
13 can, one other concern is as we read the bill the
14 understanding, ah, that it would create a separate
15 system, um, of complaints, ah, separate and apart
16 from the Department of Constituent Services, which
17 was just codified under law, um, by this council a
18 couple of years ago, um, and concerned about creating
19 a duplicative system that would be costly, ah, during
20 this time.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, OK, and then the
22 other, the other bill, um, around, um, ah, police
23 engagement on, um, sweeps if, if you will, or, um,
24 you know, engagement with, um, ah, street
25 homelessness. Um, the reason why, ah, we're looking

1 at, at, ah, um, moving this legislation is that, um,
2 during the budgeting, ah, the FY21 budget, it was our
3 understanding that, um, the New York City Police
4 Department was no longer going to be, um, engaging in
5 going to do, um, sweeps or whatever, whatever
6 terminology you want to use. Um, but we still
7 continue to, to see that happen in cases and, um, you
8 know, we know that, from our understanding there was
9 an MOU that was discontinued between, ah, DSS and
10 NYPD. Um, but, um, there are still instances where,
11 where police are, are engaging. So, um, can you
12 speak a little bit more about, um, specifically what
13 the, um, opposition to this bill would be considering
14 that, um, it is the policy, I think, of the
15 administration under the, our understanding the
16 dissolution of the MOU and as part of the FY20
17 budget, um, that police should, aren't supposed to
18 have any role in this, ah, in any type of outreach.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: So as,
21 um, ah, Chief Holm acknowledged in the testimony,
22 there are instances in which, um, so broadly
23 speaking, our outreach teams are working 24/7, um,
24 canvassing the city to engage individuals who are
25 experiencing homelessness. Um, as was noted, um, in

1 the testimony there are times where, um, our outreach
2 workers, um, have either, you know, there's been a
3 threat of violence made or there's been a prior, ah,
4 a prior experience, um, with violence where we want
5 to balance both continuing to engage the client,
6 ensuring that, um, we're checking on them, their
7 health and well-being, continuing to engage that
8 client, and also balancing the, ah, need to ensure
9 the safety of our providers. Um, there are other
10 instances in which, um, if, ah, outreach workers,
11 although, again, trained to deescalate situations,
12 um, that even that rigorous training might not always
13 be sufficient, um, and having that police escort, um,
14 is important. There's also, um, important work that
15 happens in the behavioral health, um, realm, um, in
16 which the co-response teams, um, do partner with the
17 PD in terms of some of the behavioral health
18 responses, um, and making sure that clients, um, are
19 getting the, the services that they need. Um, so I
20 think the concern is, is that by categorically taking
21 it out, um, it, ah, creates challenges in terms of
22 the balance and impeding achieving our goals, which
23 is working to engage the clients, um, ensuring that
24 our staff and our providers are also safe, and then,
25

1
2 um, you know, maintaining sort of the safety of the
3 general public as well. Um, we don't have all of the
4 agencies who would be impacted by this bill today at
5 the hearing, including some of our partners, like EMS
6 and FDNY. Um, DOHMH is here but I know that Gail is,
7 is, you know, one, one program within DHS, or excuse,
8 DOHMH and, and not this particular one. Um,
9 similarly, Parks Department.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, are there any
11 instances, how, how many times, or what percentage of
12 the time, um, in the past year has, um, NYPD, um, ah,
13 been engaged on a, on a call regarding, ah, such a
14 person on the street?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: I don't
16 have that number today.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, if we could get
18 that information, like how many, basically how many
19 calls, ah, that DHS went out on also involved NYPD
20 [inaudible]?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: Sure. I
22 think something that's important to note is the work
23 that our outreach teams are doing, um, independent of
24 calls that could be made from community members to,
25 um, EMS or 911, ah, and where NYPD is responding.

1
2 Um, NYPD would respond to, um, something within their
3 jurisdiction irrespective of somebody's housing
4 status. Um, but I can certainly see what data we
5 have and, and what we can get back to you with.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Is NYPD ever
7 responding to a, um, a, a call, um, like a 311 call
8 that somebody is, ah, homeless and taking up the
9 sidewalk or something like that, where it's not a 911
10 call but a 311 call? Does NYPD ever respond to
11 those?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: I
13 unfortunately can't answer questions for NYPD today.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, does, do
15 outreach, ah, workers, ah, provide soft services such
16 as blankets, socks, feminine hygiene products,
17 etcetera, if an unsheltered individual, um, rejects
18 entering shelter?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: Sure.
20 So part of, part of building the relationship, ah,
21 with a client can, can look many different ways, um,
22 and it has included, um, giving out water bottle on
23 Code Red days, um, socks and the like, um, feminine
24 hygiene products, etcetera.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So that is, that is
3 permitted?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK. Does, does it
6 happen? Is that something that, ah, OK. Um, is that
7 a change of policy? I know a couple of years ago
8 that was not the official policy of DHS?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: So we
10 had, um, had, um, supplies available at safe havens
11 and drop-in centers. Um, there were times where
12 things like socks would be given out. Um, last year
13 we worked, ah, with advocates, ah, to expand, um, our
14 partnership with one of the, ah, philanthropic
15 organizations that we work with in terms of getting
16 additional socks, for example.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, when DHS engages
18 with a client on the street are they, are individuals
19 counseled on the different types of services and
20 shelters that are available to them? So are they
21 counseled about that, that there are in fact safe
22 haven, ah, beds available, that there are in fact,
23 ah, stabilization beds available, etcetera?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: Sure. I
25 mean, that's part of building the relationship, um,

1 and working to, to meet the clients where they're at.
2 I mean, part of one of the things that has been, you
3 know, what we need more of but has also been
4 impressive is by bringing on the additional
5 stabilization and safe haven beds, right, there are
6 times where a client will say I want to come inside,
7 but that sort of latter half of that sentence is I
8 want to come inside in the neighborhood that I've
9 been, you know, accustomed to and engaged in for the
10 last, you know, X period of time. Um, if we don't
11 have capacity in that neighborhood on a particular
12 night, um, we miss the opportunity to bring a client
13 inside. Our goal and what we're seeing by the
14 increase of safe haven and stabilization beds is that
15 clients are coming inside and they're coming inside
16 and able to be placed in, you know, locations that
17 are familiar to them. Um, and I think it's also
18 worth noting that, you know, there are clients who,
19 um, you know, we as the public might see on the
20 street during the daytime. It doesn't mean that they
21 don't have a placement. It doesn't mean that, you
22 know, they still aren't going to locations that might
23 be, um, prime for panhandling, um, and that sort of
24 thing. Um, but, yes. I mean, we work to, to share

1
2 with clients, um, and individuals on the street the
3 sort of, um, you know, variety of options that are
4 available to them. Um, you know, drop-in centers,
5 church beds, and if I can, I'll just mention drop-in
6 centers, um, I just want to update my response about
7 the, the, the drop-in centers and chairs, so we
8 actually have about the same number of chairs as we
9 did last year compared to this year and that's
10 because we've actually opened additional locations.
11 So it's not a, it's not a, a, a reduced number of
12 chairs. It's actually about the same number of
13 chairs, just at, at multiple more locations.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, I just want to
15 ask a couple more questions, um, regarding, um, ah,
16 this is within the context of this bill, um,
17 chronically, ah, chronically homeless, ah, our
18 definition of chronically homeless and, and, ah, um,
19 our, can you explain what the definition of
20 chronically homeless is and are we using that
21 definition to, um, ah, currently, ah, during COVID,
22 um, for eligibility to enter a safe haven or a
23 stabilization bed?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: I'd have
25 to get back to you on that.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Oh, because I know
3 that that's been a, I mean, that's been a long-
4 standing criteria for entering a safe haven, um, at
5 least pre-COVID was...

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: Right.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...um, our
8 understanding of chronically homeless was, um, you
9 know, I think it was cited three times, um, no
10 shorter than over a period of nine months.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: Right.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, and I'm just...

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DRINKWATER: I mean,
14 the, the definition of chronically homeless hasn't
15 changed. Um, I just want to get back to you in terms
16 of your question about the, the COVID response in
17 particular.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK. Ah, OK, yeah, if
19 we could, ah, I'd be interested to know that. Um,
20 OK. Ah, those are all the questions, ah, for me.
21 Ah, do any other council members have questions for
22 the panel? OK, um, seeing none, I want to thank you
23 all very much for your testimony and for, ah,
24 answering the questions of the committee, and I look
25 forward to working with you, um, not only on these

1
2 pieces of legislation, but on, um, ah, the issues
3 that we've all, ah, been talking about today and
4 trying to build a better system, um, and help ensure,
5 um, [inaudible] care of the most vulnerable people in
6 New York City. I want to thank you for your time.

7 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you, Chair.

8 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. Um, OK,
10 we're gonna take a, a four-minute break, four- or
11 five-minute break and, ah, we'll return for public
12 testimony. [pause] OK, everybody, thank you very much
13 for your patience. Um, I'll turn it now over to
14 Amita Kilowan, committee counsel, ah, to call the
15 first public panel.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We are now going to
17 turn to public testimony. I'm going to be calling on
18 individuals one by one and panelists will have three
19 minutes to testify. We ask that you limit your
20 testimony to three minutes and, as always, you can
21 submit longer written testimony for the record.
22 Council members who have questions for a particular
23 panelist should use the raise hand function in Zoom
24 and I will call on you after the panelist has
25 completed their testimony. For panelists, once your

1 name is called a member of our staff will unmute you
2 and the Sergeant at Arms will give you the go-ahead
3 to begin upon setting the time. Please wait for the
4 sergeant to announce that you may be speaking before
5 delivering your testimony, and please note that there
6 is a slight delay with the unmuting function. Our
7 first four panelists are going to be in this order.
8 Theodora Ranelli, Craig Hughes, Gioselle Ruthier, and
9 Eric Lee. I will now call on Theodora Ranelli to
10 testify.
11

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

13 THEODORA RANELLI: Hi, um, my name is
14 Theodora Ranelli and I'm a tenant in scatter site
15 supportive housing and I will be speaking today in
16 that capacity. Um, first I would like to thank Council
17 Member Levin and his staff for holding this oversight
18 hearing and working with advocacy groups to advance
19 this legislation. As a supportive housing tenant I
20 have experienced how difficult it has been to get
21 real clarity on the rights of tenants, and I think
22 this bill takes an important step in the right
23 direction by requiring this information to be
24 provided to us up front. Building on this
25 foundation, I offer these suggestions, which would

1
2 strengthen the legislation by allowing supportive
3 housing tenants to actually use and enforce the
4 rights outlined in this legislation. So my first
5 suggestion is to require supportive housing providers
6 to comply with the bill of rights. Um, my primary
7 feedback on this bill is that I would strongly
8 encourage the council not only to require supportive
9 housing providers to inform of us our rights, but
10 also that the providers comply with the rights
11 outlined. One of the most difficult things about
12 being a supportive housing tenant is that every issue
13 that arises with respect to our housing is mitigated
14 through nonprofit social service providers.
15 Particularly in scatter site supportive housing,
16 tenants are encouraged or even required to bring any
17 housing issues to case managers or on-site housing
18 liaisons, many of whom do not respond to our concerns
19 or have policies which directly contradict our tenant
20 rights. As a result, whether the rights outlined in
21 this bill are enforceable for tenant housing,
22 supportive housing tenants, depends on whether or not
23 nonprofit providers are required to follow them. At
24 present, nothing in this bill requires them to do so,
25 and I hope future drafts of this legislation will

1 consider this addition. And my second recommendation
2 is to include anti-retaliation privileges. Um, in
3 addition I strongly encourage the council to
4 incorporate an anti-retaliation clause that would
5 support, that would prevent supportive housing
6 providers from harassing or displacing tenants who
7 report a provider for failure to comply with this
8 legislation. It is no secret that supportive housing
9 tenants citywide have suffered and continue to suffer
10 from retaliation by nonprofit service providers when
11 they assert their tenant rights. This has a chilling
12 effect on supportive housing tenants' ability to
13 self-advocate and it is directly counterproductive to
14 the intent of this legislation. Um, since this
15 legislation is primarily enforceable through a
16 tenant's grievance process, strong anti-retaliation
17 measures are essential to ensuring its effectiveness.
18 And I would also add that, um, that it is technically
19 permanent housing, but that depends on whether the
20 prices negotiated with nonprofit and the landlord are
21 sustainable for the nonprofit and sustainable for the
22 landlord. So it's support, it's, um, permanent
23 housing in that regard only. Um, and I want to thank
24 you for your opportunity to testify today and for
25

1
2 your efforts to ensure that supportive housing
3 tenants have the same rights as all New York City
4 tenants. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Theodora, thank you
6 so much. Um, I just want to, um, thank you for your
7 testimony here as well as your, um, ah, your
8 willingness to, ah, ah, speak the other day. We
9 spoke for, um, ah, some time about provisions of this
10 legislation and, um, ah, they were all very well
11 thought-out and instructive and I think would, ah,
12 the ideas that you raise and, and have raised will,
13 will make this a better bill. So thank you very much
14 for, for the time and [inaudible].

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you again,
16 Theodora. We'll now call on Craig Hughes, followed
17 by Gioselle Ruthier. Over to Craig Hughes.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

19 CRAIG HUGHES: Ah, thank you, ah, I mean,
20 to Chair Levin and members of the General Welfare
21 Committee for holding the hearing today. My name is
22 Craig Hughes. I'm a social worker at the Safety Net
23 Project of the Urban Justice Center. I'll start this
24 testimony by noting that it's, ah, less than 40
25 degrees outside and raining. Temperatures are

1 dropping or freezing as the sun goes down and heavy
2 snow will fall, ah, at least two days this week. New
3 York City has no serious plan to ensure homeless
4 people are able to get warm, specifically in context
5 of the COVID crisis and correspondent reduction of
6 accessible spaces to folks on the street. In sum,
7 there's no serious plan to ensure people won't freeze
8 to death. And according to reporting in the *Daily*
9 *News* we know that at least one person has died so far
10 related to cold temperatures this year. One reason
11 for this is the governor's decision to shut down
12 subways, which have provided the only overnight
13 heating source for many homeless folks. Another
14 reason is that Mayor de Blasio has simply refused to
15 contract hotels or other spaces to ensure sufficient
16 individual rooms are made available for homeless
17 people during the crisis. New York City simply also
18 refused to embrace a housing first approach, which is
19 evidence-based and means providing housing first and
20 foremost and services from there. While we've seen
21 one reported death, we will like see others, and this
22 is the outcome of a pervasive and avoidable failure
23 under the de Blasio administration. Individuals and
24 families on the street find themselves navigating a
25

1
2 bureaucratic and blame-heavy maze when they try to
3 come inside. Individuals face a homeless services
4 system that has extending policing into the center of
5 its outreach processes where city-contracted agencies
6 work hand-in-hand with Sanitation and the NYPD to
7 toss people's belongings and move them from site, and
8 where agencies still require multiple engagements to
9 place someone into a safe haven or stabilization bed.
10 It's been clear this is direct outcome of DHS not
11 requiring its contracted outreach teams to house
12 people first and most, first and most importantly and
13 also the de Blasio administration's utter refusal to
14 ensure that supportive housing landlords don't make
15 it virtual impossible for somebody to come on the
16 street, someone on the street to come inside.
17 Indeed, they are given, ah, they are even, ah,
18 they're not even concerned enough about this to
19 bother systemically collecting the data for analysis,
20 and it was testified to today the CAPS system that is
21 not currently, the CAPS system is not currently
22 equipped to provide the necessary data on provider-
23 level rejections. Whether we will ever get this data
24 can't be left to a voluntary choice on the part of
25 DSS. That's a feature and not a bug or deficit in

1 the CAPS system and placement processes, especially
2 given the extensive input and decision-making power
3 [inaudible] supportive housing industry reps in
4 designing the CAPS system. Undoubtedly there is far
5 more need for supportive housing units than there is
6 supply of the supportive housing units. But
7 acknowledging the difference between supply and
8 demand is almost always where the conversation ends.
9 That needs to change and as the years of data
10 released to us has shown, and which I can attest to
11 being a social worker for more than a decade, folks
12 on the street are least likely to be accepted by,
13 into supportive housing by a provider. Until the
14 city is willing to seriously address the almost
15 unbelievable amount of discretion it grants to
16 supportive housing landlords to curate who lives in
17 their buildings we will simply never come near
18 resolving the crisis of street homelessness in New
19 York City. In relationship to folks on the street,
20 too often we hear of the need to build a trusted
21 rapport and, and the difficulties the city has with
22 that. But we hear so much, we hear so much, in fact,
23 because it actually functions as a way to tuck away
24 the bureaucratic maze...
25

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

3 CRAIG HUGHES: ...[inaudible] some who
4 want to come inside and shift blame onto those
5 without homes, rather than city agencies or
6 contracted providers tasked with helping them inside.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: You can finish your
8 testimony. You can go ahead and finish your, I mean,
9 you don't, go ahead and finish all you have, that's
10 fine.

11 CRAIG HUGHES: Oh, OK, thank you. That's
12 very generous. I'm, I'm not gonna take too much
13 longer. Um, but thank you. We need to speak more
14 of, ah, did you offer this person a safe individual
15 room? Did you help them get placed into supportive
16 housing first? Or is New York City really running a
17 system where the reality is, in fact, housing last,
18 if ever. I would report that it's the latter. While
19 outreach teams do truly vital work, it's undeniable
20 how much under Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Banks
21 the city has designed its outreach teams to function
22 as a soft arm of the cops. And it's undeniable that
23 while supportive housing providers do lifesaving
24 work, the city has across the board failed homeless
25 people and those in the, in supportive housing units

1
2 are refusing to ensure these individuals don't face
3 screening or discrimination at the door, or
4 retaliation or evictions on their way out. By
5 looking at supportive housing as solely a type of
6 social service we've forgotten the fundamental power
7 dynamic is that of gate-keeping who can get in and
8 the power dynamic inherent in who can evict and who
9 can be evicted. Supportive housing providers provide
10 necessary services, unquestionable. But they're also
11 landlords, and they act like typical landlords far
12 too often. If we don't acknowledge that in every
13 conversation and we [inaudible] confront it, we are
14 failing homeless people and formerly homeless people,
15 period. In relation to this legislation, we're in
16 support of the two bills today and in support of
17 passing Intro 47, which would require data on
18 supportive housing rejections and which has
19 languished in this committee for more than two years,
20 in large part due to the pushback of the supportive
21 housing industry. Quite literally, this is simply a
22 reporting bill about who is accepted or not accepted
23 into supportive housing. It's been fiercely resisted
24 by the city and supportive housing industry reps, and
25 given the importance of supportive housing in

1
2 resolving homelessness in New York City, it's almost
3 unbelievable how little data we have about who
4 actually gets it and who gets evicted out. We
5 support the outreach bill because it would reduce
6 NYPD contact with people on the street and that's a
7 net win. NYPD has absolutely no legitimate role or
8 helpful role in outreach. However, we would caution
9 on two ends. First, this is not an anti-sweeps bill,
10 which is what's needed. This isn't because the
11 safety net project is interested in seeing the
12 proliferation of camps. It's because repeatedly
13 moving and harassing homeless people at a site does
14 not resolve homelessness. Housing does that. Offer
15 people housing versus living outside in a tent and
16 see what happens. We suspect a lot more people would
17 be housed and a lot fewer [inaudible] will pop up.
18 This is my last piece. Secondly, we support a
19 supportive housing bill of rights. This is
20 desperately needed, and we thank you, Council Member
21 Levin, for putting it forward. We have some specific
22 suggestions, ah, to language in our written
23 testimony, but for the purpose of this moment I'll
24 simply point that any resistance or pushback from
25 ensuring tenants know their rights is evidence of

1 just how much New York City does not hold reasonable
2 expectations of the supportive housing industry. And
3 how the city maintains a blind spot towards
4 supportive housing tenants' and applicants' rights.
5 With tens of thousands of supportive housing units in
6 New York City we can't allow supportive housing in
7 aggregate to be a system that allows folks with
8 disability to know or pursue their rights any less
9 than those in market rate apartments. We, we can't
10 act with the tens of thousands of supportive housing
11 apartments are somehow also space where poor people
12 have fewer rights. The last point I'll make is just
13 to Mike Bosket's, ah, testimony earlier regarding
14 CAPS. Um, I will say that I'm not alone, but I can
15 testify on my own behalf. SNP asked to become part
16 of CAPS. HRA, ah, Mike Bosket in particular,
17 Commissioner Bosket never found the time to respond.
18 Other people were flat-out rejected. As far as I
19 know, it's the only COC committee that requires, ah,
20 an ability, ah, an assessment of whether or not
21 someone should be put on. Ah, the supportive housing
22 industry [inaudible] and other agencies were, are
23 directly at the center of it. But advocates who are
24 doing this work with people on the street are not.
25

1
2 And that speaks for a lot of what we do or don't see
3 at CAPS, including whether or not provider-level
4 rejections is actually available in that data. Thank
5 you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Craig.

7 I'll now call on Gioselle Ruthier, followed by Eric
8 Lee.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

10 GIOSELLE RUTHIER: Thank you, um, thank
11 you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is
12 Gioselle Ruthier. I'm the policy director at
13 Coalition for the Homeless. We have submitted
14 written testimony in conjunction with the Legal Aid
15 Society, which provides detailed information about
16 issues our clients have encountered with supportive
17 housing. I will summarize the main points now. As
18 we reported at the last oversight hearing on
19 supportive housing in 2018, our clients continue to
20 encounter many issues relating to the application
21 process, placement logistics, and services provided
22 in supportive housing. On applications the 2010e
23 eligibility determinations done by HRA allow for
24 significant clinical and administrative latitude from
25 HRA administrative staff who have no contact with

1 applicants and as a result there's much inconsistency
2 in the review process and eligibility outcomes. Some
3 specific problems we have encountered include
4 documenting unsheltered homelessness and a lack of a
5 formal appeals process to dispute decision. On the
6 placement process, once an application is approved
7 the prospective tenant faces a new set of hurdles
8 before receiving keys to an appointment. Applicants
9 must undergo an interview with a supportive housing
10 provider, where experiences vary widely. For
11 example, some applicants report having to complete
12 complex forms during the interview or even to be
13 considered for an interview, including paperwork that
14 once signed waives their rights to manage their own
15 money and benefits. On services we have worked with
16 many residents of supportive housing who are at great
17 risk of leaving their placements because of a lack of
18 appropriate services. In some supportive housing
19 case management is cursory and focused only on those
20 requirements necessary for the provider's financial
21 billing, as opposed to the tenant's actual and
22 expressed needs. Because of limited time, I will
23 refer to our written testimony for full details
24 outlining the problems our clients have encountered
25

1 in the application and placement process, as well as
2 within supportive housing. On the bills being heard
3 today, we fully support Intro 2176, which will create
4 a bill of rights for supportive housing residents.

5 This bill will provide a much-needed uniform
6 information resource for individuals moving into and
7 currently living in supportive housing, including
8 information about tenants' rights, the regulatory and
9 financing schemes for the unit, and relevant points
10 of contact for any problems an individual living in
11 supportive housing may encounter. We have a few
12 technical comments on the language in the bill, which
13 are detailed in our written testimony. The primary
14 concern is that the bill proposes a new definition of
15 word tenant that does not match the definition in the
16 real property law, and which could exclude current
17 residents of supportive housing whose tenancy rights
18 are not yet recognized from receiving critical
19 information outlined in this bill. To be clear, we
20 fully support the goal of making sure all supportive
21 housing tenants have tenancy rights, but this bill is
22 structured only to provide notice of people's
23 existing rights, a critical and much-needed resource,
24 which we want every person living in supportive
25

1 housing to receive. We also support Intro 2177,
2 which would prohibit police investment in outreach to
3 unsheltered homeless individuals. This bill is a
4 long overdue shift away from addressing
5 homelessness...
6

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

8 GIOSELLE RUTHIER: ...[inaudible]. Thank
9 you for the council for the opportunity to testify
10 today and for your steadfast commit to addressing
11 homelessness.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Gioselle.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Gioselle.

14 I will now call on Eric Lee to testify.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

16 ERIC LEE: Ah, good afternoon. My name
17 is Eric Lee and I'm the director of policy and
18 planning for Homeless Services United. Ah, thank
19 you, Chair Levin and members of the General Welfare
20 Committee for allowing me to testify today. Um, in
21 the interest of time I'll summarize my written
22 testimony. While we recognize the scope of this
23 hearing is largely focused on supportive housing
24 oversight, we want to take the opportunity to discuss
25 the immediate needs of unsheltered homeless New

1
2 Yorkers, given the legislation being heard. Street
3 homeless individuals are at mortal risk of both
4 COVID-19 and freezing temperatures and there must be
5 a coordinated response led by DHS Street Solutions
6 outreach teams, but supported by other city agencies
7 and systems, including the Office of Emergency
8 Management, the NYPD, the MTA, public and private
9 hospitals, and faith providers. HSU strongly
10 supports the decriminalization of homelessness and is
11 agreement with the council that clinicians and social
12 workers must be the primary point of engagement with
13 street homeless individuals. But we have concerns
14 that Intro 2177 would have detrimental impacts to
15 both homeless clients and service providers.
16 Prohibiting police officers from offering any
17 connection to homeless services would effectively
18 remove their ability and responsibility to assist
19 homeless individuals. Officers will still engage
20 street homeless individuals on their beat, but their
21 only action would be limited to taking is telling
22 them to either move along or arrest them if
23 coordination with DHS is barred. Outreach efforts
24 must, must be tailored to the individual situation to
25 effect the best outcome for clients and outreach

1 teams need the ability to proactively involve the
2 NYPD as necessary to keep staff and other homeless
3 people, including the individuals engaged, safe.
4 Current beneficial collaborations that would end
5 under this bill would include police officers
6 reaching to DHS outreach teams when spotting homeless
7 individuals and proactive NYPD involvement with
8 outreach teams when moderating, to act as a
9 moderating presence to safeguard everyone in
10 surrounding areas when engaging individuals with
11 histories of dangerous or threatening behaviors, as
12 well as during follow-up outreach canvassing in the
13 same area to other individuals. With regards to
14 homeless encampment sweeps, limiting or even banning
15 sweeps that don't pose an immediate health risk would
16 reduce opportunities for negative police
17 interactions, better meeting the council's goal of
18 stopping the criminalization of homeless people
19 without compromising clients, staff, or neighborhood
20 safety. Cold weather has already claimed the life of
21 a New Yorker this winter and we are greatly concerned
22 that lack of access to warm spaces will increase the
23 number of people freezing to death. And we urge the
24 city to create a multi-department response to stand
25

1
2 up accessible daytime warming centers as well as
3 expanded nighttime options for individuals who choose
4 not to enter shelter. This is, there is a perfect
5 storm of limiting factors which are further detailed
6 in my written testimony, um, with regards to, ah,
7 impacting and killing, um, shelter-adverse street
8 homeless individuals. And we would welcome...

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

10 ERIC LEE: ...the opportunity to work with
11 the council to creative collaborative outreach
12 efforts and develop additional spaces and resources
13 to keep them safe. Thank you for the opportunity to
14 testify.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much,
16 Eric. I am now going to call up our next panel. Our
17 next panel will be in this order. Laura Missou,
18 Emily Friedman, and Sandra Dressel. And we'll begin
19 with Laura Missou.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

21 LAURA MISSOU: Good morning, Chairperson
22 Levin and members of the General Welfare Committee.
23 My name is Laura Missou. I'm the executive director
24 of the Supportive Housing Network of New York. Thank
25 you for the opportunity to testify. We will be

1 submitting written testimony, but wanted to highlight
2 a few recommendations. Um, first of off with the NYC
3 1515 program, we are pleased with the progress of
4 development for congregate housing. However, the
5 awards for scatter site program are falling below
6 their goal. Over the past few decades scatter site
7 rates have become insufficient to cover both rent and
8 services, and many providers are hesitant to continue
9 embracing the model. We would like to offer two
10 alternatives. One is to reallocate the proportion of
11 scatter site to congregate and NYC 1515, reducing the
12 scatter site proportion to 25% and 75% for congregate
13 development. Second, to look at reallocating scatter
14 site service funding to help in the preservation
15 effort. We have a lot of existing preservation that
16 has very minimal services in it, some as low as \$2400
17 a year, and these programs have buildings with
18 sufficient and needed capital considerations. And so
19 we would like to push some of the 1515 funding into
20 that program in order to provide services that are
21 needed that would go along with the capital.
22 Shifting to existing housing, the existing scatter
23 site program, as I just mentioned, is severely under-
24 funded and last year money was added to the program,
25

1
2 which was very helpful, but we'd like to see more
3 money continue to be added. The current rate for a
4 market rate apartment is \$1760 for an FMR, and that
5 translates to over \$21,000 per year for more scatter
6 site projects and the contract is only at 17 and
7 that's only rent. In regard to HPD, we are pleased
8 to see the partial restoration of 466 million in
9 FY21, but remain concerned about the 583 million that
10 was not restored in FY20, and we'd like to see a
11 realistic plan for how these cuts will be restored.
12 And, also, since the pandemic HPD has not issued any
13 soft commitment letters, which means that any new
14 projects have been suspended for nine months. There
15 has not been any acquisition or predevelopment
16 financing. And we would like to see those soft
17 commit letters start up again. And lastly the Empire
18 State Supportive Housing Initiative is facing year
19 five. There is no more funding in the program. This
20 was the governor's commitment for 20,000 units over
21 15 years, and we need to see the governor commit to
22 the next 14,000 units and hope the City Council will
23 support us in that effort. Thank you so much, ah,
24 for this moment to testify.

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE 134
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much,
3 Laura. I'll now call on Emily Friedman, followed by
4 Sandra Dressel.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

6 EMILY FRIEDMAN: Good afternoon, Chair
7 Levin and committee members. My name is Emily
8 Friedman and I'm a staff attorney in the civil action
9 practice at the Bronx Defenders. Thank you for your
10 attention to these critical matters and for the
11 opportunity to testify before you today. In the
12 civil action practice access to stable quality
13 housing is an urgent need for many of our clients.
14 We meet clients in two ways. First, through our
15 interdisciplinary model we work with clients who are
16 facing housing consequences due to the criminal legal
17 system or other court entanglements. The second way
18 is through direct referrals from housing court as
19 right to counsel providers in the Bronx. Through our
20 housing work we are familiar with the problems,
21 deficiencies, and challenges tenants living in
22 supportive housing experience, either because our
23 clients are fighting to access supportive housing or
24 because we are helping clients defend against
25 displacement from their supportive housing. What is

1 most troubling about these cases is that our clients
2 have already fought through perhaps the hardest parts
3 of their lives to be deemed eligible for supportive
4 housing only to face losing it because of the very
5 issues that made them eligible in the first place.
6 They have significant histories of chronic
7 homelessness, serious mental illness, and persistent
8 substance use. With little income, often relying on
9 Social Security benefits or public assistance, the
10 supportive housing is one of their few opportunities
11 to access transitional or permanent housing. When we
12 meet our clients it is because they are at risk of
13 losing that critical opportunity. We support Intro
14 2176, the supportive housing tenant's bill of rights,
15 as a necessary first step towards ensuring that those
16 living in supportive housing are informed of the
17 rights they already have. The bill of rights
18 recognizes that those residing in supportive housing
19 have an actual contractual right to live as tenants
20 in the supportive housing site rather than merely
21 stay there. This legislation will protect the most
22 vulnerable New Yorkers New Yorkers because the bill
23 requires written notice that centralizes and makes
24 explicit tenants' rights, including grievance
25

1
2 procedures and reasonable accommodations that will
3 provide protections against discrimination, as well
4 as providing alternatives to eviction, and the bill's
5 promotion of transparency, access to legal services,
6 and meaningful notice of rights will prevent
7 evictions. We urge the council to consider going
8 even further. Specifically, the supportive housing
9 tenants' bill of rights would be improved by
10 increasing the level of enforcement and oversight,
11 expanding due process protections, and tailoring the
12 distribution of information to the needs of those
13 that are struggling with recovery. We implore the
14 City Council to consider our suggestions and use this
15 as an opportunity to enforce the rights of supportive
16 housing tenants to the fullest. Thank you for your
17 time and the opportunity to speak on such important
18 matters.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,
20 Ms. Friedman.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Emily. I
22 will now call on Sandra Dressel.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

24 SANDRA DRESSEL: Good afternoon. Thank
25 you, Chairperson Levin and committee members for the

1
2 opportunity to testify this afternoon. My name is
3 Sandra Dressel and I'm a senior staff attorney in the
4 mental health law project at Mobilization for
5 Justice. To begin, I want to thank Chair Levin for
6 his leadership on this issue and for putting forward
7 Intro 2176, which MFJ fully supports. The mental
8 health law project at MFJ witnesses daily the power
9 of supportive housing to positively transform and
10 stabilize the lives of our clients. However, we
11 also witness the many challenges New Yorkers face in
12 accessing supportive housing, understanding and
13 asserting their rights to meaningful support services
14 and habitable housing, and maintaining their
15 supportive housing. Supportive housing programs
16 operate through a patchwork of different funding
17 streams and are subject to different regulatory
18 frameworks that can be confusing for an advocate, let
19 alone a tenant, to untangle. The lack of clear
20 accurate information regarding applicable rights and
21 options for recourse and enforcement of said rights
22 dilutes the essential supports intrinsic to the
23 supportive housing model and contributes to a very
24 real sense of housing insecurity for those who are
25 lucky enough to even get placed. Given the timeline

1
2 I was regretfully unable to coordinate with
3 individual tenants to testify directly today. But I
4 do want to share a couple stories to remind us all
5 why this is so important. Earlier this year a
6 community organization referred Hannah to our intake
7 line. After aging out of the foster care system, she
8 moved into a supportive housing SRO unit, subsidized
9 by project-based Section 8, while pregnant with her
10 first child. After she disclosed her pregnancy to
11 the supportive housing program she was misinformed
12 that she would need to move out of the building and
13 leave the program immediately after giving birth
14 because her unit is an SRO and is for single adults
15 only, no children. This was a young woman, first-
16 time mother-to-be, with mental health disabilities,
17 who had never lived independently in the community
18 before. And as you can imagine she was petrified.
19 Earlier this year Jackson also contacted our intake
20 line. He has bipolar disorder and PTSD, in part
21 related to prior assaults by a past roommate. He had
22 requested a reasonable accommodation transfer to a
23 single-occupancy unit because his mental health
24 prohibited him from residing with roommates.
25 Although he supplied ample medical documentation, the

1
2 supportive housing program informed him that this is
3 a business and they have no single-occupancy units.
4 Fortunately, someone referred him to MFJ several
5 months later and when the program wouldn't respond to
6 our reasonable accommodation request, we filed a
7 complaint at the New York State Human Rights
8 Commission. However, the unavailability of written
9 notice of rights and what his recourse was and the
10 availability of legal services, um, meant that he was
11 prevented from...

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

13 SANDRA DRESSEL: ...asserting his rights
14 sooner and his health and well-being suffered due to
15 the delay. Hannah's and Jackson's stories are not
16 exceptions. I could share stories all afternoon. I
17 would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that
18 generally speaking our nonprofit providers are doing
19 the very best that they can with extremely limited
20 resources. However, it is clear that a written bill
21 of rights would go a long way towards equipping
22 tenants with the tools they need to ensure they have
23 the stable housing and support services they deserve.
24 Um, in conclusion, ah, I also want to, um, reference
25 back to what Chair Levin said earlier about the need

1
2 for tenant advocates, um, and disability advocates to
3 be at the table. Um, MHLP welcomes the opportunity
4 to partner with City Council, the administration,
5 city agencies, and the supportive housing industry to
6 work together to ensure that people with disabilities
7 have the housing they deserve. Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Sandra.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I'm now going to call
11 up our next panel. Our next panel will be in the
12 following order. Debra Berkman, Sarah Blanco, James
13 Dill, and Lyric Thompson. And we'll begin with Debra
14 Berkman.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

16 DEBRA BERKMAN: Thank you. Chair Levin,
17 council members, and staff, good afternoon and thank
18 you for the opportunity to speak to the Committee on
19 General Welfare on supportive housing and homeless
20 outreach. My name is Debra Berkman and I'm
21 coordinating attorney in the public benefits unit and
22 the Shelter Advocacy Initiative at the New York Legal
23 Assistance Group, or NYLAG. NYLAG is a civil legal
24 services organization who combats economic, racial,
25 and social injustice by advocating for people

1 experiencing poverty. We aim to disrupt systemic
2 racism by serving individuals and families who legal
3 and financial crises are often rooted in racial
4 inequality. I'm the coordinating attorney of the
5 Shelter Advocacy Initiative at NYLAG. The Shelter
6 Advocacy Initiative provides legal services and
7 advocacy to low-income people in and trying to access
8 the shelter system, and for those experiencing street
9 homeless. The proposed local laws, Intro 2177 and
10 Intro 2176, would have a very positive impact on my
11 clients' lives and we wholeheartedly support them.
12 Removing police officers from engaging in the
13 outreach process to individuals experiencing
14 homelessness is an important step towards making
15 outreach to those individuals more effective. Police
16 officers are not trained social services providers
17 and many, if not all, of my clients experiencing
18 street homelessness are afraid of contact with
19 police. Those clients experiencing street
20 homelessness generally don't just end up on the
21 street and most of them have actually stayed in
22 shelters before, and they found it intolerable to be
23 there. There are many reasons that this may be the
24 case. Quite a few clients describe violent

1 interactions with shelter police, staff, and other
2 residents, and fear for their safeties, safety.

3 Other clients have had traumatic interactions with
4 the NYPD and as a result avoid police contact. Some
5 of NYLAG's clients are, who are experiencing street
6 homelessness also have mental illness and other
7 mental health issues. Ah, and some of these clients
8 describe the presence of police officers as

9 increasing their anxiety and exacerbating their
10 symptoms of their mental illnesses. Additionally,

11 while homelessness itself is not a crime, there are
12 laws that criminalize conduct inherent in living on
13 the street, such as public urination or other so-

14 called quality of life issues. Clients have
15 described interactions with police officers,

16 purportedly engaging in outreach, that have ended in
17 a citation or even an arrest. And for someone
18 experiencing street homelessness, even getting a

19 ticket can be devastating. If they don't pay their
20 ticket, most likely because they can't afford to do
21 so and don't appear in court, they may be subject to

22 bench warrant. An arrest may also lead to job loss
23 and difficulty obtaining a job, either because
24 they're not able to attend work or because their

25

1 interactions with the criminal law system. Contact
2 with the criminal legal system can also result in a
3 criminal record that may prevent people from
4 qualifying for NYCHA housing. Thus, interactions
5 with enforcement can, law enforcement, excuse me, can
6 actually perpetuate homelessness. Another reason
7 that clients are hesitant to engage with the police
8 is that some clients experiencing street homelessness
9 have had their belongings taken or destroyed by the
10 police as per sweeps or, or as they're sometimes
11 referred to, clean-ups.

12
13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

14 DEBRA BERKMAN: Oh, OK. Ah, when an
15 encampment is scheduled to be cleaned up, ah, clients
16 have no choice but to carry away what possessions
17 they can hold in their arms. Um, this has led to my
18 clients losing many of their best possessions. And
19 the bill specifically addresses this by defining
20 outreach as including the removal of individuals'
21 personal property. To sum up, we greatly support
22 both of these bills. Thank you very much.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much,
24 Debra. I'll now call on Sarah Blanco.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

1 SARAH BLANCO: Hello, ah, good afternoon,
2
3 Chair, members of the General Welfare Committee and
4 everyone in this room. My name is Sarah Blanco. I
5 serve as the clinical director at Midtown Community
6 Court, a project site of the Center for Court
7 Innovation. First of all, thank you. With the
8 council's support Midtown Community Court was able to
9 support the population touched by this hearing by
10 purchasing and distributing food, PPE, clothing, and
11 blankets in and around Midtown. Alongside our
12 amazing community partners we were also able to
13 provide naloxone kits, flu shots, COVID testing, and
14 linkage to medical care. Additionally, Midtown
15 Community Court social workers continue to, to
16 provide individual and group counseling, mental
17 health support, and harm reduction services. Based
18 on our experience in Midtown since the 1990s,
19 homelessness, mental health, mental illness, and
20 substance use are not effectively addressed through a
21 penalizing criminal justice approach. They're more
22 effectively addressed through a public health
23 approach. Our written submission details two pilot
24 programs we are launching to address the intersection
25 of homelessness, mental health, substance use, and

1 criminal justice system investment based on our
2 experience and what is effective. The first program
3 is tentatively named the Community First Pilot
4 Program. It is a collaboration with Times Square
5 Alliance, Breaking Ground, and Fountain House. The
6 coalition feels it is important to utilize
7 alternatives to traditional policing to solve the
8 community concerns that are emerging in and around
9 Times Square during this pandemic. This pilot
10 program will be a holistic community response,
11 working to link individuals to social and wellness
12 services. We do this by employing teams of community
13 navigators, individuals with lived experience, who
14 will really be boots on the ground to provide
15 outreach to unsheltered individuals, utilizing our
16 partnership while engaging in substance use and
17 mental health and medical services but also connect
18 them to essential, essential services, such as
19 housing, bathrooms, showers, and clothing.
20 Additionally, Midtown Community Court in partnership
21 with Fountain House again, the Midtown North
22 precinct, NYPD's behavioral health unit, is launching
23 Midtown's Rapid Engagement Initiative. For many
24 individuals living with serious mental health issues,
25

1 substance use, housing and food instability and
2 insecurity, we recognize that these untreated needs
3 can escalate quickly into crisis. These individuals
4 may encounter police at the moment of crisis and need
5 immediate support. This moment is critical and
6 requires a coordinated approach for tools law
7 enforcement does not have available at the time and
8 are most needed when someone is brought to the
9 precinct. This initiative would fill a gap that
10 currently exists by staffing a social worker and a
11 peer navigator on call to the Midtown North precinct,
12 who would engage individuals in voluntary services
13 after the person is released from the precinct. It
14 would be rapid engagement, immediate engagement.
15 Addressing issues of homelessness, substance use, and
16 mental health requires the public health approach.

17
18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

19 SARAH BLANCO: And we hope to continue to
20 demonstrate its effectiveness. I want to thank the
21 council for supporting the innovative Justice
22 Solutions Initiative that permits us the flexibility
23 to provide community-based solutions to our most
24 vulnerable community members. Thank you so much for
25 your time.

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE 147
2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,
3 Ms. Blanco.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now call on
5 James Dill, followed by Lyric Thompson. James.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

7 JAMES DILL: Good afternoon. I'm Jim
8 Dill, ah, executive director of Housing and Services,
9 Inc. We shorten our name to HSI. HSI is a not-for-
10 profit, ah, developer and operator of permanent
11 supportive housing. I wish to speak about the impact
12 of the lack of, ah, HPD soft commitment letters and,
13 ah, the FY20 capital budget cuts, ah, are having on
14 the, ah, supportive housing industry in, ah, New York
15 City. We are participating in the city's very
16 successful NYC 1515 program that streamlines the
17 development of urgently needed supportive housing,
18 and we're currently constructing an HPD-funded
19 project up in the Bronx. However, the lack of HPD's
20 soft commitment letters and the [inaudible] HPD
21 capital funds has shut down the city's supportive
22 housing industry's ability to access NYC 1515 funds
23 for new projects. HPD commitment letters are
24 required to leverage acquisition predevelopment and
25 construction funding from other sources. HSI has

1
2 struggled without success to find alternative sources
3 of funding and is losing [inaudible] opportunities to
4 acquire sites at cheaper COVID rates. Shutting down
5 the pipeline of supportive housing development will
6 not save money in the long run, but will only result
7 in, ah, longer shelter stays and dramatically
8 increase the costs of, ah, other, ah, services, such
9 as emergency rooms, incarcerations, and other less
10 humane Band-Aid solutions. Beyond the monetary cost,
11 the pandemic highlights the ever-mounting costs paid
12 by New York City's most vulnerable, primarily persons
13 of color. Now more than ever the city needs
14 supportive housing to relieve overcrowded shelters
15 and to prepare for a looming pandemic-created
16 eviction crisis. The unintended consequence of the
17 lack of HPD commitment letters [inaudible] not-for-
18 profit developers are losing good sites to for-profit
19 developers, who have quick access to capital. HPD,
20 ah, HSI has already lost two great sites to that, to
21 the for-profits. After years of skyrocketing land
22 prices the pandemic offers opportunities for lower
23 land acquisition costs. Without access to HPD
24 capital the supportive housing costs the city even
25 more as land prices escalate post pandemic. HSI

1
2 urges the committee to consider the ramifications to
3 the lack of HPD commitment letters and they need to
4 restore HPD's FY20 capital budget. With the housing
5 tsunami losing, now is the right time to super charge
6 the city's supportive housing pipeline for both
7 fiscal and humane purposes. I, I thank you for the
8 opportunity to speak and, ah, am very thankful for
9 the 1515 program, the project we have, ah, the
10 support we got from HPD, HRA, and, ah, DOHMH. Ah, we
11 would love to do more. Thank you so much for your
12 time.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Jim.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thanks again, Jim. I
15 am now going to cal up our next panel. Our next
16 panel will be in this order, Arlo Chase, Theo Chino,
17 and Chi Osse. We'll begin with Arlo Chase.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

19 ARLO CHASE: Ah, sorry, can you guys hear
20 me? Um, yes. Hi, thank you, I'm sorry, I was
21 another Zoom. Anyway, apologies. Ah, my name is
22 Arlo Chase. I'm senior vice president of Services
23 for the Underserved. I appreciate the opportunity to
24 testify today. Ah, Chair Levin, I miss seeing you at
25

1
2 the Park Slope food co-op, but, you know, maybe, ah,
3 sometime soon, hopefully. Um, so...

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Still members, just,
5 you know, ah, wayward member.

6 ARLO CHASE: Yes. Ah, ah, so, um, excuse
7 me one second. Um, so SUS, for those of you who
8 don't know, is a social service and housing
9 organization. We've been around for 41 years. We
10 provide housing and services to a whole range of
11 folks, um, people with developmental disabilities,
12 mental illness, addiction challenges, as well as just
13 low-income New Yorkers. We operate 150 programs and
14 about 120 sites throughout the city in all five
15 boroughs. Um, so I'm here to just testify on a
16 couple of the points. Ah, mostly were echoed very
17 well by, ah, [inaudible]. First of all, the HPD
18 capital budget cuts are, you know, I think extremely
19 and thankfully, you know, half of them, this year,
20 the fiscal year, I know was reinstated, but, um, the,
21 it would be really wonderful and, and to the
22 continued production of supportive housing to
23 reinstate the cuts from last year. Um, we have
24 several projects, ah, that are awaiting funding that
25 are, we have land, we own the sites, we have, ah,

1 site control, we have zoning, we're just waiting for
2 the money, and we could create, um, close to a
3 thousand units of housing, ah, for both supportive
4 and low-income with the, ah, with the HPD funding
5 that we're waiting for. The other thing is, ah, as
6 Laura testified to, the, the HPD current policy of
7 not issuing site support letters, we were one of the
8 organizations in the market to buy vacant land to,
9 um, try and create even more opportunities for
10 supportive housing and the current policy, um, has
11 really stopped us, where we're out of the market
12 basically and, you know, at this time, you know, as
13 everyone on this call probably knows, housing and
14 housing development has always led to recovery from
15 the city's, um, depressions and economic downturns
16 and when land is cheaper it's a, it's a great
17 opportunity for organizations like SUS and the rest
18 of the supportive housing community to, ah, to be
19 able to capitalize on those opportunities. Um, and I
20 think I'll end my testimony there. Appreciate any
21 questions.
22

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,
24 Arlo.
25

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE 152

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Arlo.

3 I'll now call on Theo Chino, followed by Chi Osse.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 THEO CHINO: Hi, Council Member Levin.

6 Um, my name is Theo Chino. Um, I'm just upset. I

7 mean, I, I don't know what else can I say. I hear

8 HPD and all that stuff, the homeless and this and

9 that. Maybe it's time not to put more money but

10 actually to go over HPD housing stock and go over

11 their spreadsheet and look at where does stock of HPD

12 housing that they have empty is sitting. Just right

13 there, my building, third-party transfer, 30 unit

14 that are empty, for 20 years. You walk two

15 [inaudible] over, 100 unit that are empty. You walk

16 250th Street, where I talked to the tenant, they

17 forget they were even HPD building. 70 unit empty

18 and they're waiting 20 years for them, for their

19 repair. Finally, someone call in and said, and they

20 say who own this building. Well, Neighborhood

21 Restore and all that stuff. And they lost them in

22 the spreadsheet. And we're talking about money and

23 billion of dollar left and right. What are we doing?

24 I mean, I run a, right now I run a, ah, a database

25 called La Shit List, where I have put all the

1
2 candidate on it and I have put all of [inaudible] on
3 it, and I have put all of the FDC data to go match
4 and rematch all the data of where HPD have lost unit
5 so I can find candidate to run for office. I am a
6 one person with a \$300 computer and able to figure
7 out. Right here in my coalition of people of La Shit
8 List I have a homeless man, \$3500 they are paying for
9 his staying in a \$20, not even a \$20, what would be a
10 \$20 AirBNB, fine by HPD, we're paying \$3500 for that
11 man to be in a shelter. And you telling me that we
12 cannot house our homeless? What kind of bullshit is
13 it? Yeah, why you muting me? I mean, you want to
14 talk data or you want to talk, you have any question,
15 let's talk right now. Any data you want to know? I
16 mean, what can I tell you? Block by block, how many
17 unit. Councilman, let's talk. I'm here.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I don't necessarily
19 have any, you know, questions prepared for, to ask
20 you. But, um, I welcome...

21 THEO CHINO: Well, I mean, what data do
22 you want? What can I send? We've been sending, we
23 wanted an investigation yesterday, half of the
24 organization came with a slum lord report called
25 United Housing for All. Basically this is like

1
2 nonprofit divvying up New York the way the colonizer
3 divvy up Africa. Basically the same way. How can we
4 make money...

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

6 THEO CHINO: ...[inaudible] of everybody
7 in New York. So you tell me and I'll help. I'm here
8 to help, but I'm tired of sitting here, hearing after
9 hearing, hearing the same thing, and nothing is done.
10 The rich are getting richer, the poor are getting
11 poorer. Let me know. I'm available.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. I'm now
14 going to call on Chi Osse.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

16 CHI OSSE: Hi, thank you, thank you for
17 pronouncing my name correctly. Also, it's funny that
18 I'm following up 'cause I'm also on La Shit List.
19 Um, good afternoon, Chair, honorable council members,
20 and guests. My Chi Osse. I'm an activist,
21 organizer, concerned citizen, and political candidate
22 running for City Council in the 36th District. I'm
23 one of the cofounders of the educational and activist
24 collective Warriors in the Garden, and since the
25 beginning of the summer we have been organizing

1
2 marches, protests, children's marches, and
3 distributing educational content regarding race
4 relations in our country. We were at the forefront
5 for the push to repeal 50-A, have organized black
6 business expos, and are planning on expanding
7 progress in our community. As an individual who has
8 led many of the marches and protests this summer, I'm
9 aware of the demands that many New Yorkers are asking
10 for when it comes to the NYPD and their operations.
11 When we talk about reimagining public safety that
12 includes removing police control from the well-being
13 of our unsheltered New Yorkers. As an ear on the
14 streets, we are asking for police to be removed from
15 the crisis of homelessness and allow for more
16 qualified agencies to do their jobs. The NYPD's job
17 is to answer to criminal activity. Mental impairment
18 and instability is not a crime, but in New York City
19 it is often responded to in that way. With that
20 being the case, rather mental health professionals
21 arriving at the scene armed officers do, which can
22 escalate situations and harm New Yorkers. The
23 houseless need help around shelter, stable
24 employment, and steady counsel. The NYPD is not the
25 answer to these problems, which is why the mayor's

1 office stopped organized units focused on the
2 unsheltered. Instead of funding the NYPD to
3 intercede with our unsheltered New Yorkers, we must
4 further reinvest in a department of homeless
5 services, social services, HRA, and the New York City
6 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. We can
7 expand, when needed, programs like the 15 for 15
8 mandate, and support for community advocates. This
9 allows for interactions with the unsheltered to be
10 led by professionals. Support for Intro 2177 is
11 vital and the authoring of it is commendable. In
12 summary, is about mental health services, employment,
13 and temporary and permanent shelter for New Yorkers.
14 Thank you for allowing me to testify.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Osse.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you again. At
18 this point if we have inadvertently missed anyone
19 that would like to testify, we ask that you please
20 use the Zoom raise hand function and we'll call on
21 you in the order your hand is raised, if we
22 inadvertently missed you. Seeing none, Chair Levin,
23 we've concluded public testimony for this hearing.

24 UNIDENTIFIED: Chair Levin, you're on
25 mute.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank, thank you very
3 much, ah, Counsel Kilowan. Um, so seeing no other
4 testimony, um, I want to thank everybody, um, who
5 testified today, ah, members of the administration,
6 um, members of the public who testified. I also want
7 to, um, thank, ah, all staff that worked on today's
8 hearing, um, ah, our sergeants, ah, for conducting
9 the hearing, ah, Johanna Castro for, um, for, for
10 organizing this, and, um, I look forward to, to
11 working with all of you. Um, I have about a year
12 left in this, in this role as chair of this
13 committee, um, and we will want to make sure that
14 we're doing everything we can, um, ah, and everything
15 that's achievable, um, to make this, ah, entire
16 programs for housing, ah, in New York City more
17 effective at, ah, bringing stability, housing
18 stability, um, health stability, um, to those New
19 Yorkers that really rely on it and need it, um, and
20 there's still a lot more work to do, um, and there
21 will be a lot work left to do, ah, after I leave
22 office, but we want to do everything that we can.
23 Um, and with that, ah, at 4:30 p.m. this hearing is
24 adjourned. [gavel] Thank you.

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date January 27, 2021