



Testimony Of Commissioner Manuel Castro of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

Before the New York City Council Committee on Immigration Oversight Hearing: Resources and Services for Newly Arrived Asylum Seekers

Friday, September 30, 2022

Introduction

Good afternoon, Speaker Adrienne Adams, Chair Shahana Hanif and members of the Immigration committee. Thank you for holding this hearing. My name is Manuel Castro, and I am the Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA). I am joined by Zach Iscol, Commissioner of NYC Office of Emergency Management, as well as my colleagues from Health and Hospitals, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Homeless Services and the Department of Education, who will be available for Q&A.

Our city is currently experiencing a complex humanitarian emergency that has been exacerbated by Texas Governor Abbott and others. In the beginning of the summer, asylum seekers were arriving in New York City individually or in small groups. Many arrived in the region, particularly in Washington D.C.-bound buses chartered by the state of Texas. Not finding support elsewhere, asylum seekers found their way to New York City.

As of August 5, the MOIA began meeting buses at Port Authority. Today we are now seeing high volumes arriving on buses coming from the U.S. Southwestern Border and other states. Between 4 and 9 buses arrive daily at the Port Authority Bus Terminal, and others arrive at other bus terminals, shelter intake centers, and airports throughout the city. Hundreds of people are arriving every day. These individuals range from single adults to families with children. Many have been in the U.S. for only a couple of days before being bused from the border to New York City. Unlike previous groups of migrants and asylum seekers, those arriving now are less likely to have a friend, family member, or sponsor contact with whom to reside. They are arriving in New York City with little more than the clothes on their backs.

Interagency Response

NYC is responding by launching a multi-agency effort to address this unprecedented humanitarian emergency. Unlike the governors of Texas and Arizona, we have welcomed asylum seekers with humanity, restoring their dignity and showing them the respect, they deserve, by providing PPE, water, medical, legal resources and transportation to shelter intake locations. Community partners have provided food, clothing, shoes, basic toiletry items, toys and reticketing for individuals who express that they want to be in another locality.

On August 1st, Mayor Eric Adams launched an emergency procurement declaration to rapidly procure shelter and other services for people seeking asylum in the United States.



Navigation Center

In addition to the supports provided by the shelter and education system, , we opened New York City's first Asylum Seeker Resource Navigation Center On September 15, 2022. The center — operated by Catholic Charities of New York through a city contract — is supporting individuals and families who have arrived in New York City on or after January 1, 2022. The center serves as a central place where newly arrived asylum seekers receive free and confidential help to access a variety of important services and resources that will help them integrate and thrive in New York City.

The Navigation Center provides families with access to everything from health care to education to immigration legal services so that they can build a life in New York City. These services are also available at shelters across our city.

The center — located in the American Red Cross of Greater New York headquarters — is opened weekdays to provide individuals and families with in-person free and confidential help in accessing several important services and resources. New York City government agencies and community-based organizations are on-site helping with case management and connections to critical services, including health care, directly and through referrals; health insurance enrollment; mental health counseling; school enrollment; enrollment in the City's municipal identification program - IDNYC; and immigration legal services, among other supports.

The navigation center is accessible by appointment. Community-based organizations and city shelter caseworkers are scheduling appointments for asylum seekers. The city will provide asylum seekers with information about the Navigation Center as they arrive by bus, as well as in shelters and through community-based organizations that serve as navigation center satellites in the 5-boroughs. In the coming weeks, the city will release information about these satellite sites where asylum seekers can access similar or additional services throughout the five boroughs.

Conclusion

Finally, it is critical that the council, the state, and the federal government work with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs and the administration to further confront the challenges of this complex humanitarian emergency.

In the interim, we will continue to advocate for the necessary tools to support arriving asylum seekers. Such resources will include opportunities to access federal government assistance via FEMA's Emergency Food and Shelter Program, the Community Development Block Grants, and the Emergency Solutions Grant. Lastly, we will continue to urge the USDHS to provide asylum seekers with expedited employment authorizations. We can't do this alone.

I don't know when this humanitarian emergency will end. But what I do know is that New York City has been, and will continue to be, a city of immigrants and we'll come together to support those seeking refuge in our city. We have, and under this Administration, will continue to



welcome immigrants from every corner of the world and ensure that however they arrive in our city they will have the support they need to thrive in our neighborhoods.

Whether your family immigrated a hundred years ago, or you recently arrived in one of the buses, you are a New Yorker, and we have your back.

Lastly, I want to thank my entire team at Immigrant Affairs for going above and beyond to help those in need and all the city employees who are stepping up to remind the world that New York City will always stand against those who cowardly use innocent families as political pawns. Unlike Governor Abbott and Governor DeSantis, New York City will always stand on the right side of history.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.



Testimony of Zach Iscol
Commissioner
New York City Department of Emergency Management
Before the New York City Council Committee on Immigration
September 30, 2022

Good afternoon, Chairperson Hanif, and members of the Committee. I am Zach Iscol, Commissioner of New York City Emergency Management, and I am here to discuss the coordinating role that New York City Emergency Management is playing in the current surge in asylum seekers in New York City.

First, I want to briefly explain our role in City government and emergency response. New York City Emergency Management helps New Yorkers before, during, and after emergencies through preparedness, education, and response. The agency is responsible for coordinating citywide emergency planning and response for all types and sizes of emergencies. It is staffed by more than 200 dedicated professionals with diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise, including individuals detailed from other City agencies. As the coordinating agency for the City of New York, Emergency Management functions as a general facilitator when it comes to emergency response: ensuring that resources are available for our sister agencies to complete their core competencies and serving New Yorkers in what can be their worst days with compassion and cultural competency.

The recent influx of asylum seekers seeking refuge in New York City is a challenging task and a great example of collaboration among city agencies. We are facing a humanitarian crisis and it has never been clearer that we need to help and support.

Emergency Management continues to coordinate between the incoming buses of asylum seekers and provide logistical support to the operations of the Asylum Seeker Resource Navigation Center. The center, opened on August 25th and operated by Catholic Charities of New York through a city contract, streamlines city and non-profit services into a one-stop-shop. It serves as a central place for newly arrived asylum seekers to receive free and confidential help accessing important services and resources that will help them integrate and thrive in New York City. Emergency Management is also coordinating with City agency partners at the Welcome Center located at the Port Authority. Those arriving can receive light medical care, water, PPE, and COVID testing; EMS is also located there in the event that someone needs emergency treatment. Individuals can also receive information for shelter in the event they do not have friends, family, or a sponsor to lean on.

Emergency Management is also coordinating the opening of Humanitarian Emergency Response and Relief Centers. The first, in Orchard Beach, will serve adults and likely open within the next week. These centers will be operated by Emergency Management and Health & Hospitals, completely outside of the DHS shelter system. They will be the first touchpoint for arriving asylum seekers by immediately offering shelter, food, medical care, casework services, and a range of settlement options including through connections to family and friends inside and outside of New York City, in addition to, if needed, direct referrals to alternative emergency supports or city shelters. All spaces will be safe, secure, climate-controlled and are built to withstand weather year-round. Emergency Management has an emergency contract that will provide for wraparound services such as: food and water, clothes, care products, and other human service needs.



This is a true interagency effort, and we continue to work with our partner agencies, as well as contracted partners and providers, to provide comprehensive on-site services and referrals. We do not know when the influx of asylum seekers will end or slow down, but we are here for the duration. New York City is a cultural mecca enriched by its diverse population, and a second home to those who make the difficult decision to leave their home country in search of opportunities. Emergency Management is proud to assist in this humanitarian effort. It is not only our responsibility as a city to help them adjust and regain their livelihoods, but it is an important investment in the future of New York.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify today.

New York City Council Immigration Committee

Friday, September 30, 2022 - 1pm

State Senator Alessandra Biaggi

Chairwoman Hanif, and members of the Committee on Immigration, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today. My name is Alessandra Biaggi and I have the honor of serving as the State Senator for the 34th District, which includes Orchard Beach.

I am testifying today to express my deep concern for the migrants who will be sent to the planned Humanitarian and Emergency Response and Relief Center in Orchard Beach's parking lot. It is my sincere hope that Mayor Eric Adams and his administration will change course and pursue alternative temporary shelter options.

My office and I have been in contact with mutual aid groups on the ground since August helping migrants acclimate once they arrive in New York City. Mutual aid organizations and migrants have expressed alarm regarding the lack of resources available upon arrival to Port Authority. Asylum seekers are arriving without knowledge of how to access resources here including food, clothing, phone service, and accessible transportation. Our government is not providing the basic necessities they need to be able to start a life here in New York or to reach their final destination. We have heard first hand the dangerous experiences migrants are experiencing in our city's shelter system, which we understand is overwhelmed, but the proposed relief center at Orchard Beach is an insufficient and inappropriate solution.

Mutual aid groups have raised important concerns about the planned facility including: lack of running water and adequate bathroom facilities; insufficient temperature control; unsafe closeness of beds; and the basic indignity of being asked to sleep in a tent outdoors. Migrants will be asked to stay in this facility for 96 or more hours — the space needs to meet basic needs. Some migrants have described the tents that are being erected at Orchard Beach as the "Heilera (YEH-LEH-RAH)" referring to the detention facilities on the border. The simple fact that these tents remind them of the trauma they have just encountered entering our country is absolutely outrageous. This cannot be the standard we set.

Orchard Beach's parking lot is in the middle of a high risk flood zone — posing needless danger to any migrants living there. Orchard Beach is a low-lying coastal area in the middle of hurricane evacuation zone 1, [the highest risk category for flooding per New York City Emergency Management](#), and is at risk of experiencing dangerous storm surges. The entire parking lot area is determined a "special flood hazard area" on [FEMA's flood map](#). There is a good reason why this area, notoriously prone to severe and regular flooding, has earned the nickname "Lake Orchard" among locals. It is irresponsible, especially during Atlantic hurricane season, to take a 'wait and see' approach to whether the tent platforms can withstand potential rain puddling or water level surges.

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, New York City and State mobilized every possible resource to ensure we could care for every sick New Yorker. I urge our Mayor to employ the

same ingenuity here so that every migrant who arrives in New York finds a safe and welcoming environment. At a minimum, Mayor Adams must consider alternate locations for relief centers, including the Javits Center. And in the midst of this crisis, I encourage the City to make systemic changes to our overburdened shelter system so that migrants and all unhoused New Yorkers are able to live a dignified life.



PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Jumaane D. Williams

TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS
TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION
SEPTEMBER 30, 2022

My name is Jumaane D. Williams and I am the Public Advocate for the City of New York. I would like to thank Chair Hanif and members of the Committee on Immigration for holding this hearing.

As the child of Grenadian immigrants, the impacts of immigration have affected not only my life but the millions of immigrant families that call New York City home. Many families are here today because immigration policies enabled them to seek new opportunities for themselves and their loved ones. That being said, it is deeply disturbing to see what has been happening nationally, with anti-immigrant governors using asylum seekers as political pawns.¹ These elected officials have bussed asylum seekers to locations they had no intention of ending up in, such as New York City, just to make a statement.

Regardless, New York City will always welcome asylum seekers and all immigrants with open arms. The City has welcomed over 10,000 asylum seekers in the past few months, but the reality for our city is that it is struggling to keep up with the growing number of asylum seekers that arrive almost every day. Our city is a right-to-shelter jurisdiction as mandated by the *Callahan* ruling.² As a result, our city is uniquely positioned to be a welcoming beacon to everyone. For many of these asylum seekers, landing in this country was an act of necessity; no one travels through thousands of miles of dangerous terrain—and with children in hand in some cases—unless the circumstances at home were dire. Their journeys often last over a month; many had to go through jungles such as the dangerous Darien Gap³ and sleep on the ground. Ultimately, they all ended up in New York City. Our city must make changes in order to mitigate the struggles it is currently facing to properly meet the needs of these asylum seekers.

I acknowledge and commend all the hard work the administration is doing to support asylum seekers. That being said, there are still questions to be asked and clarification needed from various city agencies on how they're coordinating efforts. I wanted a better sense of what was happening on the ground, so I visited three different sites that asylum seekers would encounter upon their arrival: Port Authority Bus Terminal, Prevention Assistance and Temporary Housing (PATH) Intake Center, and a shelter.

At Port Authority, I spoke with some families, including those with infants, to hear more about their experiences up until this point, and my team helped to provide and distribute backpacks to families with children. At PATH Intake Center, I was provided a walkthrough of the center and the process, from initial processing to shelter placement. I also spoke with two families who had different arrival journeys, but both went through weeks of travel across numerous countries. Most recently, I made a visit to a shelter in Hollis, Queens, where regrettably an asylum seeker took her own life. We found out that the shelter was not meant nor prepared to house asylum seekers and was severely understaffed, with 1 worker per 100 residents, with a maximum capacity of 500 residents. I am deeply concerned that we may see similar stories in the weeks to come if greater transparency, accountability, and culturally responsive resources (especially linguistic and mental health resources) are not provided throughout our shelter system.

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/06/nyregion/migrant-bus-texas-ny.html>

² <https://www.escr-net.org/caselaw/2006/callahan-v-carey-no-79-42582-sup-ct-ny-county-cot-18-1979>

³ <https://www.cfr.org/article/crossing-darien-gap-migrants-risk-death-journey-us>



PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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SEPTEMBER 30, 2022

Furthermore, this additional strain on the shelter system has put an even brighter spotlight on the need to codify the rights of unhoused individuals, both in and out of shelters. [Int. 0190-2022](#), which was heard by the City Council earlier this September, would further codify and publicize the rights of unhoused individuals to access legal, language, education, and shelter services. New York City is already a right-to-shelter city, and it only makes sense to pass Int. 0190 into law to accompany our city's status as a right-to-shelter jurisdiction.

Shelters would not be so under strain if the backlog and wait times for housing vouchers were expedited. Some individuals that currently reside in shelters have been living there for years. Affordable and supportive housing is one pathway to simultaneously transition them from homelessness to a permanent housing situation and open capacity at shelters. My office recently released a report, the [Committee to End Homelessness by the Year 2026](#). It goes into detail about the goals and strategies to end the homelessness crisis. One of the report's recommendations is to expand CityFHEPS eligibility to allow people who work and earn up to 50 percent of the city's Area Median Income to qualify and to waive the work requirement for those not employed but on public assistance to qualify.⁴

Additionally, one of my greatest concerns lies with asylum seekers who are children. According to recent Department of Homeless Services figures, of the 11,800 asylum seekers in the DHS system, approximately 8,000 are families with children. Enrolling these children in school is imperative in facilitating the transition post-migration as well as providing a safer space and environment where the children have access to hot meals. My main concerns have to do with bilingual education programs, overall language accessibility, and access for the parents who themselves have to navigate the educational system on behalf of their children. The Department of Education must ensure that their processes for placing asylum seeker children is as transparent as possible and takes into consideration the transient status of the children and their families in regards to housing and the immigration system.

Lastly, in order for the City to continue to improve upon itself to meet the needs of our growing asylum seeker population, we need financial support from the federal government. Many of these programs that are arising to meet this heightened need cannot be executed nor succeed if there is not enough funding. Furthermore, we must direct funding straight to mutual aid groups, community-based/fair-based organizations, and clergy who have been working on the ground and directly with asylum seekers. Many of these groups and volunteers are doing this work without any compensation and deserve to be acknowledged and compensated for their efforts. At the end of the day, advocates, the administration, and everyday New Yorkers are all working to the same goal, and that is welcoming our newest New Yorkers regardless of where they come from. We must collectively work together to coordinate a sustainable, culturally and linguistically sensitive, and compassionate response to treat all asylum seekers with dignity and respect, and I believe this can be done.

Thank you.

⁴ <https://www.pubadvocate.nyc.gov/reports/committee-end-homelessness-year-2026/#permanent-housing-solutions>

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION
9/30/22

I am Ruth Messinger, former Manhattan Borough President. I submit this testimony in my capacity as a once-a-week volunteer at the Port Authority bus terminal, joining with others to welcome the immigrants/asylum seekers arriving each day from Texas.

I am glad that there is a serious effort being made by the State, the City and the Port Authority to meet the busses, address the immediate needs of the arriving immigrants and try to plan for the future.

But some things need to be made clear to the City Council. It is distressing to hear the City claim credit for doing all of the welcoming work, and fail to acknowledge the work being done by an amazing army of lay people organized by TLC NYC, an astonishingly effective group run and managed by Ilze Thielmann, herself a volunteer. Ilze is there every day, has assembled a group of regulars, continues to absorb new volunteers, and to do her utmost to cooperate with the City staff present who do not, in my opinion, fully respect or facilitate the substantial NGO effort.

Every day this volunteer group, starting at 530 am, has to drive down to the bus terminal in order to bring bags and bags of donated clothing which is being beautifully distributed to our newly arrived residents. They also have to bring in each day their most essential supplies for registering and organizing the army of volunteers. **This is absurd**, particularly since there is a largely empty closet right there adjacent to the arrival area that is empty and could be used for these purposes, eliminating a huge amount of lifting and moving which I and others do each day to prepare for the bus arrivals.

I was particularly outraged this week. The Red Cross contributed blankets for the people getting off the buses—a lovely gift, indeed. But the boxes of blankets were miraculously stored in another Port Authority closet, brought out as needed by the City and then distributed by the TLC volunteers. **Who arranged for the Red Cross, the City and the PA to use a closet when another one sits empty that could**

be used for the much larger volume of clothing and materials that the volunteers need ? . If the Red Cross can have access to a storage closet, then so should the volunteers. They should have had this closet months ago.

I urge the Council to intervene, to address this problem and to find a way to acknowledge and honor the work being done by TLC NYC volunteers. It would also be very important to urge that the City designate a coordinator who can work with the volunteers and maximize the collaboration between them and the government agencies in the interest of maximizing the services being provided.

Similarly, a coordinator could facilitate further distribution of the clothes, which are being donated in huge quantities, at the different shelters to which people are being moved. There are lots of clothes and lots of volunteers; what is needed is more assistance to this effort from the City, State and Port Authority, something the Council could insist on.



NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION
FRIDAY September 30, 2022, 1:00 p.m.
SUBJECT: Resources and Services for Newly Arrived Asylum Seekers

My name is Dorian Rojas. I am the Director of the Immigration Project at Volunteers of Legal Service (VOLS). VOLS was established in 1984 and our purpose is to leverage private attorneys to provide free legal services to low-income New Yorkers to help fill the justice gap. Since then, we have nimbly responded to emerging public crises, such as the 1980's HIV/AIDS epidemic and the 2008 financial recession. Our clients have been at the forefront of those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis. Today, we respond to this humanitarian crisis with the same passion and dedication.

Our Immigration Project offers free legal education on immigration issues in the form of know-your-rights trainings, as well as on-site or virtual clinics, all of which help to educate young and often newly arrived immigrant New Yorkers of their rights. Once clients are referred to VOLS, we offer them free, confidential screenings and legal assessments. In turn, we assist our clients to pursue immigration status available to them, and we advise them on how to safely navigate interactions with government, legal, educational, workplace, and/or financial institutions.

Given the client population we serve, VOLS Immigration Project staff are experts in the forms of legal relief for which immigrant young people are most likely eligible. Core services include assistance to apply for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status (both initials and renewals), Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS), asylum, Temporary Protected Status (TPS), and assistance with other immigration matters leading to citizenship. Our team has further developed expertise on immigration-adjacent issues. We provide our clients with information or assistance on how to access financial aid, secure identity documents, or apply for eligible unemployment benefits as an immigrant. To address recurring or new immigration law issues, we provide ongoing legal support for our base of several hundred past clients.

For more than a decade, the VOLS Immigration Project has empowered NYC undocumented young people to resolve their immigration legal challenges, so they can understand their rights and pursue their education and career. We build deep and trusted relationships with educators, counselors, and program providers at schools and other community-based organizations. VOLS often reaches young people and young adults who might not otherwise access legal support due to cost or lack of information.

VOLS also is actively involved with the New York Immigration Coalition and the Immigrant Advocates Response Collaborative. As part of our coordinated approach with area partners, we contribute to public policy analysis and advocacy efforts.

Through our direct services, meetings with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, partnerships with legal service providers and immigrant rights coalition, and our involvement with schools and community-based organizations, we have become keenly aware of the needs and struggles of newly arrived asylum seekers.

In our experience newly arrived immigrants, even if welcomed at port authority, are struggling to navigate the city and gain access to resources. Many of them arrived having no relationship to the city and with nothing but the clothes on their backs, and their needs range from water, food, clothing, shelter, and social, medical, and legal services. The families we have served have expressed gratitude for the multi-agency effort to place them in shelters and provide them with information on where to obtain their basic necessities but explain that the shelter system is hard for them to navigate. Many understand that shelter is temporary housing and feel anxious about whether they will obtain permanent housing in a city already enduring a housing crisis. Among their top concerns are housing, school enrollment for their children, and how to navigate the immigration system.

Most newly arrived immigrants have been provided notices to appear in immigration court. Many of these families have not been properly notified. Their notices have been sent to legal services providers, like VOLS, who they have no connection to and have never had contact with. Even if properly notified, most families have been settling into the city and have not had the opportunity to consult attorneys to explain the notices and/or help them effectively raise legal defenses. Additionally, most families do not have the means to travel to immigration court, and do not know how/cannot access the technology needed to avoid in person appearances and avoid being deemed removed in absentia.

A few weeks ago, VOLS was contacted by a local community shelter, and informed that there are about 100 newly arrived families hosted there and none have had the opportunity to speak with an attorney. This is concerning because many newly arrived families have quick turnaround dates to appear in court. Furthermore, in our experience, many families are misinformed/mislabeled as asylum seekers. When a proper legal screening is performed, we have found that many qualify for other forms of humanitarian relief but do not know about the relief in order to pursue it. Given the timeframe of their notices and the lack of human capacity at legal services organizations in the city, it is unlikely that these families will be provided with effective assistance of counsel by their hearing dates. Most will show up to the judicial process without legal representation.

In New York City schools, some school leaders are anxiously awaiting the enrollment of newly arrived immigrant youth. They have voiced concerns about the lack of information provided by the city and explain that this makes them ill-equipped to effectively serve the students and provide them with the resources that they need once they arrive. Those who have already welcomed students are navigating language access and social services issues.

Though the city has made a valiant effort to welcome newly arrived immigrant there is still much work to be done. Through workshops, in-person clinics at schools, and informational meetings, VOLS Immigration Project is working closely with our community-based organizations and schools to help ameliorate this humanitarian crisis.

Dorian Rojas
Immigration Project Director



**Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Immigration
Oversight – Resources and Services for Newly Arrived Asylum Seekers
September 30, 2022**

Introduction and Thanks:

My name is Patrick Boyle and I am the Assistant Vice President for Public Policy for Volunteers of America-Greater New York (VOA-GNY). We are the local affiliate of the national organization, Volunteers of America, Inc. (VOA). I would like to thank Chair Hanif, as well as the other members of this Committee, for the opportunity to offer the following testimony.

About Us:

VOA-GNY is an anti-poverty organization that aims to end homelessness in the New York area by 2050 through housing, health and wealth building services. We are one of the region's largest human service providers, impacting more than 11,000 adults and children annually through 65 programs in New York City, Northern New Jersey, and Westchester. We are also an active nonprofit developer of supportive and affordable housing, with a robust portfolio of permanent supportive housing, affordable and senior housing properties—with more in the pipeline.

Resources and Services for Newly Arrived Asylum Seekers:

First, we would like to thank Chair Hanif and the members of this Committee for hosting this important hearing. The past several months have been a challenging time for nonprofit providers and for staff at City agencies like Department of Homeless Services (DHS), whose dedication under difficult circumstances we want to acknowledge. But they have been beyond challenging for the families who have escaped dangerous conditions in their native countries, endured an arduous journey to get here and found themselves in the midst of a political firestorm in the United States. We are simply amazed by their courage and as an organization are honored to help in any way we can.

Volunteers of America-Greater New York operate four Tier II family shelters, with a fifth opening imminently, along with a single men assessment shelter, an employment shelter for women and six sites that offer services to survivors of domestic violence. We are also in negotiations to provide services at a newly operational site set aside exclusively for asylum-seeking families. At our existing sites and assessment shelter, we began seeing an increase in asylum-seeking families and individuals over the summer. At this point, asylum seekers are the predominant group at the assessment shelter, at about 2/3 of the entire population.

We are committed to helping these families reach their long term goals, whether that be here in New York City or involve connecting with families and support systems elsewhere. For many,

with a long term goal of legally obtaining asylum here in the United States, that will involve connections to legal assistance. As you know, legal organizations that offer free assistance in the areas of asylum and other immigration services have serious capacity issues at the moment. We encourage the City Council and Administration to continue to work together on policy and funding mechanisms that will make more legal assistance available to these newly arrived families.

Additionally, being stabilized and successful here in New York City will involve permanent housing and access to a social safety net that without policy changes will prove elusive due to immigration status. The City must work with the State of New York on any changes required by law to allow City tax dollars to be used on rental assistance and other safety net programs for families regardless of their immigration status.

In addition to long term challenges, there are very real short term needs that we and other providers are trying to meet. Items like clothing, bedding, baby items, culturally appropriate foods, toiletries and kitchen items – the essentials – are an immediate need for our families. The City must take up a coordinated and centralized effort that will pair the network of philanthropic interests and businesses ready to give generously with the providers working directly with families.

Finally, crises of this magnitude require robust assistance from a Federal government which has played a large role in how things have unfolded to date. We call upon our Congressional and Senate representatives to determine what is possible under current avenues of appropriation and get funds to New York City as expeditiously as possible.

Volunteers of America-Greater New York is committed to ending homelessness in the region. This is our goal for all clients who come to our programs, regardless of status or circumstances that brought them to us. We look forward to working with all who share that goal.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted by:

Volunteers of America - Greater New York
135 West 50th Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10020



Testimony of Win (formerly Women In Need, Inc.)

for the New York City Council Committee on Immigration on needed resources and services for newly arrived asylum seekers

Thank you to Chair Hanif and to the esteemed members of the Immigration Committee for the opportunity to offer testimony.

Win is New York City's largest provider of shelter and services to families with children experiencing homelessness. We operate 14 shelters and nearly 600 supportive housing units across the five boroughs. Currently, more than 6,200 people call Win 'home' every night, including 3,490 children — in total, we house over 10 percent of homeless families with children in New York City.

In recent weeks, Win has seen a major influx of migrants entering our shelters. Right now, Win is providing emergency shelter for 245 migrant families, including more than 700 children. Many of the families that have arrived are in dire need and have suffered unspeakable trauma prior to arriving in New York. Unfortunately, many of these families have been used as political pawns by Republican Governors with little to no consideration given to their wellbeing as they were shipped from the southern border to New York. As a result, migrant families are arriving with serious unaddressed trauma and medical needs, and with almost nothing but the clothes on their backs.

Although Win has stepped up to provide migrant families with the elevated level of resources and services they need, we have had to tap into reserves and private donations to get by. For Win and other providers to be able to properly serve the growing number of migrant families, we need immediate action and assistance from the city. First and foremost, the city must commit to covering costs incurred by providers as we provide necessary services and resources that were not covered in our original contracts. Further, the city must ensure migrants receive proper screening and services while upholding their right to shelter. Finally, the city should free up capacity and create a pathway for migrant families out of shelter by eliminating archaic rules and expanding voucher eligibility to non-citizens.

Win and its staff have been forced into a corner, having to provide additional support, with no additional resources from the city. Although the team at Win has done an incredible job filling this gap by tapping into private resources, it is not sustainable. The city must step up and provide additional resources so that providers can meet the growing need. For starters, the city must commit to paying providers back for additional costs incurred to provide necessities that are not covered by their contracts. Win has spent thousands of dollars on food, clothing, and other needed supplies not covered by our contracts just to ensure that migrant families core needs are being met. In addition to reimbursement, the city should also create flexibility for providers to use money from unfilled staff lines to pay for unique human capital needs related to the migrant crisis, most critically, translation services.

For migrant families to thrive in New York, they need access to any and all benefits they are eligible for. Unfortunately, many of the families arriving at Win have not received any screening for benefits eligibility or started the formal application process for asylum. In April 2022, NYC announced the Ukrainian Response Initiative, which among other things, provided immigration legal assistance and



direct cash assistance.¹ Yet, the primarily Black and Brown migrants arriving from Central America, Africa, and the Caribbean are being offered tent cities and no coordinated screening effort. To meet the needs of the newly arrived migrants, it is imperative that they are connected to the services they are entitled to. Many of the migrant families who have ended up at Win, fled unimaginable violence and political turmoil, leading them to seek out asylum in the United States. Asylum seekers, who are legally allowed to be in the country as they pursue their case, are entitled to a variety of benefits. As new arrivals to this country, it is unlikely that many are aware of the benefits they are entitled to, which is why it is critical that the city implement a coordinated and wholistic screening process. The city needs to ensure that all newly arriving migrants are screened for both asylum and benefits eligibility right away.

As the city responds to the immediate challenges related to the influx of migrants, it is imperative that the administration remains in compliance with the right to shelter. As migrants arrive, they must be afforded the same basic rights as any other New Yorker. Although migrants may require some unique services, their needs are the same as any other New Yorker experiencing homelessness. Creating two systems will undoubtedly create separate and unequal processes. Migrant families have faced tremendous adversity to get here, and we must treat them with the dignity and compassion they deserve.

Although the city is currently operating in crisis mode, there is no end to the crisis in sight without changes in policy. There are several immediate steps that the city should take to help current shelter residents move out faster and free up desperately needed shelter capacity. One obvious place to start would be eliminating the 90-day rule, which needlessly forces families to live in shelter for 90 days before they are even eligible to apply for housing assistance. Earlier this summer, Win found that one third of families in our shelters were precluded from applying for housing assistance because of this illogical rule. In addition to eliminating the 90-day rule, the city should ensure that providers have more resources to meet the need related to the current influx of migrants. In addition to paying providers back for migrant related expenditures, the city should fund more housing coordinators to help families currently in shelter move out faster and further address the capacity crisis. Although freeing up capacity is necessary, this crisis will not end until all the migrants arriving in New York City have a clear path to permanent housing. To ensure that migrants have access to housing resources, the city must expand CityFHEPS eligibility to all New Yorkers in shelters regardless of their immigration status.

Although the city needs to do more, the magnitude of the current migrant crisis requires more commitment from every level of government. In particular, the federal government needs to expand work eligibility and pave the way for migrants to access housing choice vouchers, SNAP, Medicaid, and other federally funded benefits.

As more migrants flow into the New York City shelter system, the city needs to step up and support shelter providers that have met the crisis head on with no additional resources. The city must make additional resources available to shelters, ensure that migrants are properly screened for benefits and immigration status, and expand housing access to all New Yorkers in shelter regardless of their immigration status, all while upholding the city's critically important right to shelter.

Thank you.



Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness
for Women and their Children

¹ New York City Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (2022) Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs Launches \$2 Million Initiative to Support Newly Arrived Ukrainian New Yorkers.
<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/immigrants/about/press-releases/moia-2mil-initiative-for-newly-arrived-ukrainian-new-yorkers.page#:~:text=Initially%20announced%20in%20April%202022,community%2Dbased%20organization%20capacity%20building>.

September 30, 2022

The Honorable Shahana Hanif
Chair, Committee on Immigration
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10007
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Testimony of the Vera Institute of Justice

Submitted to the Committee on Immigration of the New York City Council, Oversight Hearing: Resources and Services for Newly Arrived Asylum Seekers

Dear Chairperson Hanif:

On behalf of the Vera Institute of Justice (Vera), I write to offer information and recommendations regarding the importance of immigration legal services that support safety and stability for newly arrived immigrants and for long-term immigrant New Yorkers. **Specifically, we urge the New York City Council to support the passage of the Access to Representation Act (S81/A1961) by New York State, which will establish a right to representation in immigration proceedings in New York.** We also urge the New York city Council to support strong investments, both continued and new, by New York City and New York State in immigration legal and social services programs.

Vera's mission is to end the overcriminalization and mass incarceration of people of color, immigrants, and people experiencing poverty. We work to transform the criminal legal and immigration systems until they are fair for all.

Over the past two months, Texas Governor Greg Abbott has bussed an estimated 2,700 migrants to New York City, as well as to places like Washington, DC, Chicago, and Martha's Vineyard.¹ This is nothing but a cruel political stunt, heartlessly treating immigrants seeking refuge as political pawns, and yet it lays bare the weaknesses of our immigration system. As government officials, advocates, legal service providers, and other direct service organizations endeavor to ensure a humanitarian response that includes protections and essential services for migrants as they arrive, there is an urgent need for long-term policies to promote fairness, safety, and stability. While there is clear need for immigration overhaul at a federal level, New York can immeasurably improve this situation on its own. Passing the Access to Representation Act will

¹ James Barragan, "New York Mayor Eric Adams slams Greg Abbott for refusing to coordinate migrant busing effort," *Texas Tribune*, September 22, 2022, <https://perma.cc/F2YW-53F6>.

ensure that no migrant arriving in New York seeking safety would be forced to fend for themselves in immigration court.

The stakes could not be higher for people facing deportation: permanent separation from families and communities and a return to dangerous conditions in another country. Deportation defense is a notoriously complex area of the law, and having a lawyer makes a huge difference: **detained immigrants with lawyers win their cases at over 10 times the rate of those without legal help.² For non-detained people, 60 percent with lawyers win their cases compared to 17 percent of those without a lawyer.³** Our immigration system is nearly impossible to navigate without counsel, and legal assistance should not depend upon the ability to afford it.

Despite these extremely high stakes and the proven benefit of access to counsel, immigrants at risk of deportation do not have the right to a lawyer if they cannot afford one. In 2013, New York City began investing in pioneering immigration legal services programs with the highly lauded New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP).⁴ The program expanded statewide in 2017 with the support of New York State, and it now ensures representation for immigrants who are in detention and in deportation proceedings across the entire state. But even with critically important investments in programs like NYIFUP and others, thousands are still forced to fend for their lives in immigration court without a lawyer.

Of the nearly 180,000 pending immigration cases in New York, **more than 50,000 people are estimated to be defending themselves without an attorney.⁵** The existing patchwork approach to legal services in New York City and across the state is insufficient. Even with strong existing programs supported by New York City and State, like NYIFUP, the need for an increased commitment to legal services for people at risk of deportation is great.

The Access to Representation Act will ensure access to counsel without discriminating against people based upon the perceived strength of their case or prior contacts with the criminal legal system.⁶ It will incorporate strong safeguards to ensure zealous, high-quality representation from case initiation through conclusion, and sufficient funding to attract and retain expert legal service providers and supervisors handling sustainable caseloads. It also includes crucial support for social service staff who can assist with addressing the trauma that can be central to the legal cases of many people seeking immigration relief.

² Emily Ryo, “Detained: A Study of Immigration Bond Hearings,” *Law & Society Review* 50, no. 1 (2016), 117-153; and Ingrid V. Eagly and Steven Shafer, “A National Study of Access to Counsel in Immigration Court,” *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 164, no. 1 (2015), 1-91, 49, <https://perma.cc/82F5-WE2D>.

³ Ingrid V. Eagly and Steven Shafer, “A National Study of Access to Counsel in Immigration Court,” *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 164, no. 1, p.9 note 37 (2015), <https://perma.cc/7J65-CZCM>.

⁴ Jennifer Stave, et al., *Assessing the Impact of Legal Representation on Family and Community Unity* (New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 2017), <https://perma.cc/3BWE-KSFD>.

⁵ See TRAC, “New Deportation Proceedings Filed in Immigration Court,” database accessed September 30, 2022, trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/ntanew. This information is refreshed monthly and may change as new data is added.

⁶ Liz Kenney, Karen Berberich, Corey Lazar, Michael Corradini, and Tania Sawczuk, *Advancing Universal Representation: A Toolkit* (New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 2021), <https://perma.cc/25XB-EGN8>.

But the benefits of this bill will not come soon enough; immediate support is needed. Investments by the City and State in legal services to meet the immediate need should also align with the principles underpinning the Access to Representation Act, including high-quality legal and social services. New Yorkers resoundingly agree that investment in immigration legal services is needed. A poll conducted by the Vera Institute in partnership with Lucid found that **99% of New York City residents support government funded lawyers for people in immigration court.**⁷

All New Yorkers benefit from humane immigration policies, which make our city safer and support a strong economy.⁸ The benefits of New York’s existing investments in immigration legal services are well-established: immigrants comprise more than one third of the City’s population and nearly half its workforce.⁹ An early evaluation of the NYIFUP pilot in New York City revealed that clients served through the program had lived an average of 16 years in the United States and were projected to contribute \$2.7 million in state, local, and federal tax revenue each year.¹⁰ During the global COVID-19 pandemic, immigrants have been responsible for life-saving work that sustained our economy, safeguarded our health, and ensured safety in our communities.

Passing the Access to Representation Act will also address systemic racial injustice. Black immigrants, who are more likely to be stopped, arrested, and incarcerated by the criminal legal system, are disproportionately funneled into the immigration enforcement system as a result of that unfair overcriminalization.¹¹ This long-term solution will help keep families united and serve communities who are criminalized and unfairly targeted by over-policing and immigration enforcement.

New York has been—and can continue to be—a leader in improving our national immigration system. Already, NYFIUP has become a model for more than 55 states, cities, and counties that have followed New York’s lead, investing in deportation defense services.¹² Passing the Access to Representation Act would also build powerful momentum in support of the Fairness to Freedom Campaign, a growing national campaign to advance a right to representation for people

⁷ Vera Institute of Justice, *Public Support in New York State for Government-Funded Attorneys in Immigration Court* (New York: Vera, March 2020), <https://perma.cc/TQ2R-DGTF>.

Tom K. Wong, “The Effects of Sanctuary Policies on Crime and the Economy,” Center for American Progress, January 26, 2017, <https://perma.cc/FEL7-R87K>; Randy Capps, et al, *Implications of Immigration Enforcement Activities for the Well-Being of Children in Immigrant Families: A Review of the Literature*, (Washington, DC: Urban Institute and Migration Policy Institute, September 2015), <https://perma.cc/Z8V9-H6MK>.

⁹ Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs, “State of our Immigrant City: Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) Annual Report for Calendar Year 2020,” <https://perma.cc/ZGD3-UAY3>,

¹⁰ Jennifer Stave, et al., *Assessing the Impact of Legal Representation on Family and Community Unity* (New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 2017), <https://perma.cc/3BWE-KSFD>.

¹¹ Jeremy Raff, “The ‘Double Punishment’ for Black Undocumented Immigrants,” *Atlantic*, December 30, 2017, <https://perma.cc/R7UZ-MKF7>.

¹² See Vera Institute of Justice, “Advancing Universal Representation Initiative,” map accessed September 30, 2022, www.vera.org/ending-mass-incarceration/reducing-incarceration/detention-of-immigrants/advancing-universal-representation-initiative. Map is updated periodically and may change as new data is added.

at risk of deportation at the federal level.¹³ Further, Vera commends the New York City Council for passage earlier this year of Resolution Number 112 in support of passage of the New York for All Act (S.03076/A.02328) and Resolution Number 66 in support of passage of the Dignity Not Detention Act (A.7099/S.7373). Both pieces of legislation would advance New York's leadership in addressing the counterproductive cruelty of our immigration enforcement system and limiting the number of people facing detention and deportation to begin with. We can lead in promoting an immigration system that welcomes immigrants and centers fairness and dignity, and it begins with the Access to Representation Act in New York, an end to immigration detention, and preventing local resources from being used to separate families and deport our neighbors.

The imperative is now clear: passage of the Access to Representation Act by the State legislature would ensure that we have the resources in place to embrace immigrants with the services and support they need to thrive. This is true for asylum seekers arriving today, immigrant family members who have been here for decades, and tomorrow's refugees seeking stability in the face of oppression. By passing this bill, we can ensure that in New York, no one faces immigration court without an attorney.

For additional information, please contact Shayna Kessler at skessler@vera.org or (917) 828-1753.

Sincerely,



Shayna Kessler
State Advocacy Manager
Vera Institute of Justice

cc: Commissioner Manuel Castro, Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs
Council Member Carmen De La Rosa
Council Member Pierina Ana Sanchez
Council Member Sandra Ung
Council Member Francisco Moya
Council Member Shekar Krishnan
Council Member Rita Joseph

¹³ Vera Institute and National Partnership for New Americans, "Fairness To Freedom: The Campaign for Universal Representation," website accessed September 30, 2022, <https://www.vera.org/fairness-to-freedom>.



Testimony

New York City Council Immigration Committee Resources and Services for Newly Arrived Asylum Seekers Friday, September 30, 2022

Submitted by C. Mario Russell, Director, Immigrant and Refugee Services
Catholic Charities Community Services, New York

Good afternoon, Chair Hanif, Council Members, and staff, I am Mario Russell, Director of the Immigrant and Refugee Services at Catholic Charities Community Services. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today and thank you for shedding additional light on this especially critical issue.

Catholic Charities Community Services (CCCS) has long been serving the immigrant and refugee community through our Immigrant & Refugee Services and across the agency's diversified Case Management Services. On average, we serve close to 30,000 immigrants and refugees each year—through a combination of case management, legal, resettlement, detention, integration, day laborer, ESL, clinical, family reunification, children, and court defense services—and we provide information and referrals in over 86,000 calls through our immigration information and assistance hotlines.

Through an extensive network of outreach, legal, and education services in New York City and Lower Hudson Valley communities, we have come to know and understand the many needs and realities facing workers, families, children who have recently arrived, or are long-time residents without legal status.

OVERVIEW

In late April and early May 2022, recently arriving asylum-seekers from the southern border began to arrive at the agency's primary administrative offices located at The Catholic Center, 1011 1st Avenue, where our Executive Management, fiscal, human resources, etc., are located. Many asylum seekers arrived lost and confused, having lost all of their personal belongings during their journey to the United States, but having arrived in New York by bus from the Southern border with immigration court documentation. During this time period, our offices met with ten (10) or more individuals in any given week, with those numbers gradually increasing as the summer months progressed. By mid-July, more than 200 people were coming to our offices each week seeking assistance. CCCS mobilized an immediate response, combining case management and

legal services to meet the immediate basic needs of these individuals; namely emergency food, basic needs supplies (hygiene supplies, diapers, limited clothing etc.) and a legal screening sufficient to assess status and immediate immigration court expectations. At our administrative offices alone, and prior to the City's RFP for a Case Management Services Provider at the newly established Asylum Seekers Resource Navigation Center (the "Navigation Center"), we met with and served more than two thousand (2,000) individuals. Since the Navigation Center opened its doors on August 25, 2022, that number has risen to over 3,000, with roughly two thirds (2/3) of the population being adults and the remainder being children of a variety of ages. This includes having provided legal assistance to well over five hundred (500) unique individuals.

Today, The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey reports that the arrival of busses carrying asylum seekers continues to increase daily, with upwards of between 3-8 buses arriving every other day.

The demographics of the newly arriving asylum seekers varies and includes single adult males, young mothers with children, two-parent family units, as well as young adult siblings. More than 80% of these individuals are from Venezuela with the second largest population from Colombia and fractional percentages arriving from other countries such as Cuba, Haiti, Honduras and Ecuador. The vast majority of these individuals do not have family or other connections to the U.S., or to New York, but they are all seeking shelter and basic day-to-day support. Their ability to work is compromised due to the statutory period for asylum eligibility and every individual we have encountered is in, or will be in, removal proceedings. The demand for support and legal representation in removal proceedings continues to increase, as does the need for assistance with navigating the Immigration Court systems, understanding what relief options are available, and meeting time sensitive deadlines.

THE NAVIGATION CENTER

Since being awarded a contract to provide site operations and case management support at the Navigation Center, effective August 25, 2022, CCCS has relocated its Case Management intake services to this dedicated location, which serves approximately fifty (50) household appointments per day. Through a combination of Case Management and other City provided services, the volume of clients seeking services increases daily. On average, CCCS can see anywhere from 50-75 individuals in a single day, with certain days seeing closer to 100 individuals. These numbers reflect a combination of adults and minor children and close to 300 with a variety of legal assistance responses.

Case Management Assistance Needs + Navigation Center Services

Navigation Center services include basic case management intake, and assessments and referrals for other services, both within the Navigation Center itself, as well as to external providers.

Households are predominantly seen on an appointment basis, with walk-in appointments being accepted based on daily capacity and presenting emergencies. The objective of each appointment is to identify presenting needs of each household and its members, address emergency needs as a priority and provide access to other services (through New York City or other non-profits) that

will assist a household in stabilizing while in New York. In some cases, that may include assisting in relocating a family to another state where they may have friends, family, or other resources. The Navigation Center was designed to offer a “one stop” location for a variety of services and benefits, and a client’s journey through the Navigation Center often follows a streamlined check-in and intake process, a brief summary of which is below:

- Eligibility verification (as established by MOIA) upon entering the American Red Cross building.
- An escort to the service floor follows where an individual or household checks in for an established appointment or is given the opportunity to schedule an appointment for a future date. Emergency needs are assessed by trained Case Assistants and prioritization is assigned as appropriate.
- A CCCS Case Manager will meet with each household with a scheduled appointment and seeks to collect basic demographic information, assess for needs with onsite service providers, and provide referrals for external organizations/programs.
- After meeting with a case manager, the household will begin a journey through the Navigation Center to meet with those City Agencies present and receive services necessary and available.

Currently onsite providers vary by day, but generally include- NY Health and Hospitals, DOE, ACS, DOHMH, MetroPlus Health, ID NYC, and legal services.

Once all City services have been provided (or future appointments scheduled when City providers are unable to meet the needs of the total census of daily appointments), CCCS conducts an exit interview to confirm that all necessary services were provided (or scheduled for the future), and to provide additional resources or referrals if requested.

Recurring presenting needs for which the City has not established a service or service provider presence at the Navigation Center are:

- Clothing
- Connections to employment/jobs
- Access to essential products (hygiene and the like)
- Support with shelter transfers/accommodations

Workforce Development Needs

While the initial, urgent needs of many are safe shelter, clothing, food, diapers, and access to medical services, stability and steady employment are the next priorities for these families. As the completion of the 40-hour course and the provision of a Site Safety Training card is a requirement for those seeking work on a construction site in NYC, the demand for OSHA/SST trainings has grown. At our hub site in the South Bronx, we have received over 200 workers looking to be placed on our training wait list and 100 of those arriving directly to our Day Laborer Center, searching for assistance with emergency needs described above.

As many of these newer arrivals do not have any existing community ties or networks, and little to no income, their needs are even more acute during the 40-hour trainings. This includes

assistance during training for food, childcare, and transportation to from their temporary shelters (which can change overnight) to our location in the Bronx. Additionally, as new arrivals are unaware of many systems here in the US, many of them are falling prey to job scams and are not knowledgeable about how to protect themselves from wage theft. CCCS provides these training services at many of its community center locations and has plans in place to increase the availability of such trainings should City resources be made available for us to do so.

Legal Assistance Needs

Redeployment for Triage and Orientation. In mid-August, MOIA requested that CCCS redeploy ActionNYC in Schools to provide legal services at the ASRNC, beginning on August 25th, 2022. CCCS and MOIA quickly convened relevant NYC DOE school partners to inform them of this shift in service provision and agreed to a redeployment period of September 2022 with promise to return to the schools in October and forward. A summary of the legal services we have provided for asylum seekers at the ASRNC through our redeployed efforts serving at the Center 2-3 days per week, and our perspective on sustainable legal service delivery forward, is provided below.

Between August 25, 2022, through September 30, 2022, serving 2-3 days per week, CCCS provided the following legal services for asylum seekers at the ASRNC:

- Nearly 350 households received Group Information Sessions (GIS) legal orientations on the difference between ICE/ERO check ins and removal proceedings before an Immigration Judge, information on effectively navigating removal proceedings and staying informed about their case processing, guidance on accessing trusted legal service providers, and resources for other supports relevant to recently arriving immigrants in NYC;
- Over 250 *pro se* Change of Address (COA) submissions and approximately 35 Change of Venue (COV) motions for individuals with erroneous CCCS or other NGO addresses, and,
- Nearly 240 legal consultations providing individualized assessments for asylum, and/or any other relief before the Immigration Court, eligibility.

To achieve these results, CCCS was required to pivot existing, and strained, resources to:

- Revise copious material from existing removal defense clinical service programs such as ICH and FGLOP referenced above,
- Update materials and presentations to address the current concerns for this recently arriving population,
- Create new materials for nuanced issues impacting this population, including handouts on erroneous address updating,
- Develop and coordinate protocols for effective, confidential, and responsive onsite legal services at the ASRNC,
- Evaluate existing staff caseload demands (upcoming call up, interview and hearing dates, time sensitive work product deadlines, scheduled intake and community events, etc.),
- Update and ensure substantive supervision for ActionNYC staff who primarily serve affirmative relief applicants and SIJS seekers on removal defense legal service provision,
- Recruit linguistically fluent volunteers to support onsite services, and,

- Establish effective administrative and data collection methodologies for follow up and service record keeping.

Capacity and resources remain a significant challenge in the delivery of legal services. Case Management appointments at the ASRNC are by household, not by individual, which throughout redeployment has been problematic and continues to be a pervasive issue as the number of household appointments increases daily. In the first week of the Center's opening, 8-15 household appointments were being scheduled per day, which quickly increased to 25-30 households per day in the first weeks of September and grew to 50-90 households in the last two weeks of this month. With a rough estimate of approximately 2.5 people per household, the demand for individualized legal services quickly outweighs the capacity available, particularly through redeployed efforts.

Additionally, legal provider resources are scarce, making it difficult to provide comprehensive and consistent coverage at the Navigation Center. CCCS was able to provide 2-3 days of redeployed coverage per week at the ASRNC and another ActionNYC partner, Immigrant Justice Corps, provided 1 day per week of redeployed coverage. This left Mondays at the ASRNC without an onsite legal provider, with 99% of household appointments indicating legal services needs in their initial intake at the ASRNC. Overflow from days where there was no legal provider onsite, or when another legal provider was unable to see all households, further overwhelmed strained resources.

Notices to Appear. In early July CCCS began receiving Department of Homeland Security (US DHS) issued Notices to Appear (NTAs) and Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) issued Hearing Notices at our Central Office, our Immigrant & Refugee Services Division located in downtown Manhattan, and at our Kennedy Center location in the Bronx. The hearing notices indicate that various CCCS addresses are the immigrant's residential address despite none of these locations having on-site housing assistance provisions. To date, CCCS has received over 1,200 NTAs and hearing notices for people with whom we have never interacted prior and who have only been recently allowed entry into the U.S.

Overtaxed First Responder Support. ILSP also houses our Immigration Court Helpdesk (ICH) and Family Group Legal Orientation Program (FGLOP) projects, first responder legal service delivery models co-located at the three NYC Immigration Courts. These programs that have been inundated with this recent demand for legal services access and are committed to provide immediate information to these recently arriving through legal triage, individual legal consultations, friend of the court services, and *pro se* application assistance to meet one-year asylum filing deadlines, to file time sensitive motions to reopen improper removal notices, to request changes in address and continuances, and for other urgent filings before the court. ILSP's ICH and FLGOP legal service delivery models are overwhelmed by the increased demand for information on asylum relief and guidance on immigration court processes from individuals on the dedicated dockets and from the recently bused asylum seekers. The immigration courts have lines that stretch around the building and down blocks, and given the overwhelm, court guards are turning people away from services at as early as 9am. ILSP's Community Legal Clinic (CLC) project, a mobile legal clinic model rotating throughout NYC and the Hudson Valley also has seen a rampant increase in bused migrants seeking access to legal information and representation. These asylum seekers have found refuge in every neighborhood across NYC and are availing themselves

of every option for accessing legal services, which are spread thin and have little to no capacity to absorb the demand.

Need for Parole Response Advocacy. With the implementation of the dedicated dockets at the New York Immigration Court at Varick, where 50% of family groups are being designated at the southern border for these specialized dockets, Catholic Charities encounters increasing numbers of Venezuelan families who may qualify for asylum. In our work with the bused asylum seekers through our offices and at the ASRNC, we see an average 60% relief available assessment with claims ranging from survivors of violence, political opinion claims, LGBTQI, Cuban Adjustment Act, and Special Immigrant Juvenile Status. Most of the Venezuelans are given limited 60-day parole allowances, requiring them to check in as an alternative to detention with DHS Enforcement and Removal Operations. Unfortunately, given the short parole period and the long waiting periods for USCIS employment authorization document (EAD) request adjudications, applying for parole-based EADs is moot. CCCS advocacy referenced above includes recommendations that parole for this population be extended to a period similar as applied to recently arriving Afghans and Ukrainians for a period of one to two years with immediate allowance to apply for EADs and that Venezuelan TPS be immediately redesignated.

CCCS' Current Legal Resources and Services for Newly Arrived Asylum Seekers. ActionNYC in Schools launched in April of 2016, with CCCS as the sole inaugural, and current, legal service provider for programming, supports vulnerable immigrant youth and their families in the safe spaces of public schools throughout the five boroughs. In partnership with MOIA, collaborating with localized outreach partners, and through DOE, CCCS engages school partners reporting high foreign born and recently arrived middle and high school students by providing on-site legal screenings and full representation before NYC family courts, USCIS, and the NY Immigration Court. Our services provide immigrant youth with time sensitive representation in age-out SIJS, support mixed status families to gain greater stability, increase economic mobility during a time of expanding need, and close a gap in legal services through a sustainable partnership with public schools. In January 2021, CCCS was granted a three-year baselined contract for the ActionNYC in Schools program. The students and families served through ActionNYC in Schools rely on this programming, which provides access to exemplary legal representation and a direct conduit, within a trusted space, for referral supports ensuring effective community integration. Loss of city-based support for this legal services program would be devastating as these students and their families are often overlooked given the necessary focus on detained and removal defense representation.

CCCS ActionNYC in Schools team boasts the largest caseload of all CCCS legal programs because of the contractually driven promise of representation to anyone with an immediate option for immigration relief. As noted above, this program has served NYC public schools since 2016 and the community reliance runs deep. Throughout redeployment, CCCS has received daily requests from our over 50 DOE school partners requesting clinical scheduling, citing emergency situations regarding their legal cases amongst newly enrolled students, and referencing long waitlists for access to ActionNYC in Schools upon our return. CCCS redeployed staff report that legal services at the ASRNC are grueling, the experiences of attendees are extremely traumatic, all households served are in unstable housing situations, information in group settings does not stick because individualized as well as repeated access to services is a necessity for impact on this vulnerable population. This team of staff also report anxiety about their existing clients, receiving

numerous emails from school partners, and concern for colleagues and themselves who are facing the demand for access to immigration legal information from all angles in their existing and redeployed service programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

New York City Responses and Support

1. The current historic level of migrant arrivals requires an increased city, state, and federal response, both immediate and long-term. Without financial and broader operational support, nonprofits will be left with the onerous responsibility of combatting conditions that worsen migrants' vulnerability to trafficking and exploitation, homelessness, and crime.

Therefore, we urge you to provide additional funds, resources, and logistical support to respond to the needs of the large numbers of arriving migrants.

2. CCCS believes that the ASRNC is a necessary triage center for addressing the immediate needs of recently arrived asylum seekers and our experiences detailed above compel us to respectfully request that City Council take into consideration the following recommendations for sustained Asylum Seeker Resource Navigation Center Legal Services:
 - a. To have the Center onsite Group Information Sessions/KYR information sessions, the limited *pro se* COA services, and the legal triage, as a separate procurement, potentially managed by an umbrella organization such as I-ARC who could create a framework for volunteers to provide these services.
 - A subcontract allowance on this component for a legal service provider to support substantive and technical assistance should be included.
 - b. A separate, multi-year/baselined procurement for robust legal services (legal screenings, full *pro se* assistance as described above: including application assistance to meet one-year asylum filing deadlines, to file time sensitive motions to reopen improper removal notices, to request changes in address and continuances, and for other urgent filings before the court, and full representation for recently arrived asylum seekers) should be made available for multiple bids to diversify the legal providers involved in this work and to increase capacity for impactful legal services across the network given the volume of recent arrivals.
3. Additional funds are needed to help support recent arrivals with workforce needs - increased staff time to offer expanded training courses, orientations, and access to job opportunities in NYC, and support for ongoing case management to ensure integration and stability for these families.
 - a. Having staff at the Welcome Center who can train new arrivals on wage theft and other workers' rights issues would be beneficial to the community.

4. Separate procurements as suggested above should each provide for ample ramp up time to effectively hire/onboard/train staff and to create protocols for the implementation of services. The satellite sites would be the service providers awarded in the second procurement, and we believe further discussions are necessary for the utility of floating clinics. The above approach would require a substantial increase in financial resources available, particularly for the second procurement described, because the current removal defense case rate on HRA IOI contracts is \$2,395 per case enrollment.

Recommended Federal Advocacy

5. Collaboration between local and federal entities is critical to addressing the current migration realities:
 - a. Exercise of legal authorities such as extended and/or humanitarian parole to protect vulnerable populations
 - b. Provide temporary employment authorization documents to mitigate the impending homelessness crisis among the noncitizen population
 - c. Designate countries for Temporary Protected Status that are experiencing temporary, unsafe conditions, for example, Venezuela¹, Nicaragua², the Democratic Republic of Congo³, and other countries whose nationals are displaced in the U.S. and unable to return safely.
6. Continued erroneous address practices will cause those seeking asylum to miss court appearances and jeopardize their status because they may never receive their documents. While we welcome recent conversations with DHS component agencies to address these concerns, this discussion has not yet properly addressed the legal and logistical challenges this situation presents.
 - d. DHS must stop listing Catholic Charities' addresses on future documents without the entities' expressed consent.
 - e. Additionally, DHS should implement a manageable process to serve migrants their legal documents without unnecessarily prolonging the detention of migrants and asylum seekers.
 - f. DHS should designate appropriate staff to respond to these concerns.
 - g. CCCS encourages the NYC Council to raise its advocacy power in this effort and demand the federal government investigate and end this practice.

1 See "Letter on U.S. Catholic community support for robust use of TPS, July 19, 2022," <https://bit.ly/3R49PLB>.

2 We recognize that TPS protection for certain Nicaraguan nationals in the U.S. remain in effect due to a federal court order. However, given ongoing reports of extraordinary conditions in the country, making return to the country unsafe, a new designation is necessary to protect nationals that are displaced in the U.S. "White House press secretary responds to EWTN's question about Nicaraguan persecution of Catholics," Catholic News Agency, Aug. 25, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3Tq0Y8L> (last visited Aug. 30, 2022). "Nicaraguan government takes over opposition newspaper headquarters," Reuters, Aug. 23, 2022, <https://reut.rs/3R1SPpv> (last visited Aug. 30, 2022).

3 Ongoing armed conflict, violence, and food insecurity in the Democratic Republic of Congo justify a designation. "Armed Conflict and violence in Democratic Republic of Congo," International Committee of the Red Cross, <https://bit.ly/3AADhSl> (last visited Aug. 30, 2022).



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**Testimony of Catholic Charities of Brooklyn and Queens Before the
New York City Council Committee on Immigration
Oversight: Resources and Services for Newly Arrived Asylum Seekers
September 30, 2022**

Good afternoon, Chair Hanif and members of the City Council Committee on Immigration. My name is Josefa Castro, Director of Parish and Community Relations for the Office of Mission at Catholic Charities of Brooklyn and Queens (“CCBQ”). For over 100 years CCBQ has been at the forefront of providing and servicing the neediest residents of Brooklyn and Queens. We provide critical services for the elderly, the homebound, the disabled, the hungry and the refugee and immigrant. We have seen a tremendous increase in the influx of refugee families from Venezuela and other countries as recently as two months ago. The Office of Mission of CCBQ and Catholic Migration Services have been on the forefront and responding to these newly arrived asylum seekers here in Brooklyn and Queens.

CCBQ has been assisting hundreds of asylum seekers that were bused to New York City from the southern U.S. border for the past two months. CCBQ was inundated with hundreds of families and individuals that came to our doors at 191 Joralemon Street in Brooklyn. On average we have been seeing 30 to 50 families daily over the past two months. Despite having limited staff and resources; we have provided case assistance and services such as food, clothing, metro cards, diapers, toiletries and gift cards when available. These refugees have multiple needs and face many barriers when seeking assistance. It has been challenging to experience the lack of resources desperately needed to respond to the needs of families and individuals. We are offering what we have available; but quite frankly that is simply not even close to matching their requirements. This includes: legal consultation, basic access to food, mental health and general healthcare services, educational enrollment, transportation access and housing assessment and stability. These vulnerable asylum seekers are struggling to navigate the obstacles that exist within the system. We will continue doing what we can to accompany them on this journey, and we look forward to continuing to work with City agencies and other nonprofits on this absolute priority.

These refugees are seeking job opportunities and it is essential that we provide workforce development training for them. That way we can equip them with the specific skills they need. The goal is for them to be able to provide for their families without depending on the many city resources that are already saturated.

We had our first Immigration Court Procedure for Border Asylum Seekers workshop at St Charles Borromeo Parish in Brooklyn where one hundred refugees attended. Catholic Migration Services provided them with the legal information needed for their cases; and Catholic Charities



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distributed information on their Social services programs available in Brooklyn and Queens. We also distributed basic resources to this community including food, clothing and toiletries. Our second workshop is scheduled for October 7th at the Presentation of the Virgin Mary Parish in Jamaica, Queens. We are planning further workshops and resource distributions throughout Brooklyn and Queens in the following months.

Our staff is culturally sensitive, and they speak the language needed to assess and provide services. The Community Outreach Center at Catholic Charities of Brooklyn and Queens has continued to serve the basic needs of the refugees with food, clothing, and information and referrals to our food pantries and soup kitchens, as well as the New York City Shelter system. At our central Community Outreach Center office, we have provided an average of 50 families, 150 individuals and 60 children with essential services per week. The refugees we encounter are primarily Venezuelans, but we also have seen Colombians, Haitians, Ecuadorians and Cubans.

This is a humanitarian crisis and requires a very multi-layered solution that calls for immediate and sufficient funding, plus the local resources available to provide comprehensive services to these asylum seekers.

Thank you.



Testimony on Resources and Services for Newly Arrived Asylum Seekers

New York City Council Committee on Immigration Oversight Hearing

Juan Diaz, Policy Associate at Citizens' Committee for Children

September 30th, 2022

Thank you, Chair Hanif and members of the City Council Committee on Immigration, for holding today's oversight hearing on the New York City government agencies' response to the provision of resources and services for newly arrived asylum seekers

Since 1945, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York has served as an independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe. CCC does not accept or receive public resources, provide direct services, or represent a sector or workforce. We document the facts, engage, and mobilize New Yorkers, and advocate for policy, budget, and legislative solutions that improve child and family well-being.

CCC is also a Steering Committee member of the Family Homelessness Coalition, a coalition of 18 organizations representing service and housing providers and children's advocacy organizations united by the goal of launching a coordinated, collaborative, multi-agency effort focused on preventing family homelessness, improving the well-being of children and families in shelters, and supporting the long-term housing stability of families with children who leave shelter.

Over 3,300 asylum seeking children and their families have recently entered DHS-shelters, seeking safety and an opportunity to have a better life.¹ They have had a traumatic journey and traveled long distances, forced to travel to New York due to political motivations by out-of-state Governors. The city's housing crisis, lack of shelter capacity, and fiscal constraints have further exacerbated their struggle.

Most of these families arrived with only clothes on their backs and limited financial resources. Community-based organizations have provided critical items like toiletries, baby kits, clothes, and cleaning supplies to asylum-seeking families.² In recent days, it was brought to CCC's attention that over 80 migrant children residing in a DHS shelter were added to a District 10 Bronx elementary school. These children lacked essential school supplies and clothes. Teachers and school officials generously purchased a few essential items, and a local community-based organization stepped in to assist. However, community-based organizations have limited resources and need the city's help.

¹ Asylum-seeking entering DHS-shelters. Retrieved from: <https://gothamist.com/news/south-bronx-school-struggles-to-accommodate-dozens-of-asylum-seeking-students>

² Community-based organization support for asylum-seeking families. Retrieved from: <https://www.newyorker.com/news/as-told-to/trying-to-find-places-for-asylum-seekers-in-new-york-citys-homeless-shelters>

We applaud the City government's effort to establish a migrant navigation center, however, advocates have raised concerns on the lack of clarity on the services being provided and the selection process of community-based organizations assigned to administered other navigation centers. There is still so much more to be done to address the urgent needs of asylum-seeking families. Therefore, it is critical that the city develop a robust and coordinated approach to the provision of emergency support and services that these migrant families urgently need.

Inter-agency communication must be improved to not only connect migrant families with existing and newly implemented services and social support but to ensure the needs of all families are appropriately met. To that end, enhanced funding and staffing is needed at City social service and housing agencies to ensure the immediate needs of families facing eviction and those already in shelter are appropriately addressed.

With respect to migrant families, the City needs to partner with community-based organizations and provide sufficient funding to alleviate the suffering of asylum-seeking families by taking the following steps:

- Fund and provide essential items such as clothes, toiletries, cash assistance, and transportation aid as well as school supplies. Many partner organizations have shared their concerns about the lack of adequate government assistance to support their efforts to serve migrant families. These organizations have provided assistance to migrant families using a combination of private and public donations and greater city support is desperately needed.
- Ensure that all the city's contracted programs have access to translation services, both written and verbal. Advocates and asylum-seeking migrants have underscored in recent weeks that lack of Spanish-speaking social services and information is prevalent at DHS-shelters and other city government agencies.
- Make immediate funding available for more lawyers and legal professionals that specialize in immigration law. Immigration assistance is essential to secure immigration status for asylum-seeking families and studies have shown that families and individuals that receive immigration legal assistance have better outcomes than those who do not receive full representation.³ Efforts must be made to deepen and make permanent investments in legal support to ensure critical resources are available to help asylum seekers navigate very complex and lengthy processes.

In recent weeks, Mayor Adams has brought into question the asylum-seeking population's right to shelter eligibility. Legal advocates and advocates for the homeless have expressed concerns about the legality of the city's position. The right to shelter in New York City exists for all those seeking emergency shelter assistance, CCC and FHC partner organizations believe this right must be upheld for everyone, regardless of immigration status.

³ Benefits of access to immigration legal representation. Retrieved from: Eagly, Ingrid V., and Steven Shafer. "A national study of access to counsel in immigration court." U. Pa. L. Rev. 164 (2015): 1.

CCC and its FHC partners are also deeply concerned with the City's actions to house asylum-seeking individuals and families in tents. The use of tents in the United States territory has proven to be problematic for migrant children, as many have struggled with stress-related symptoms and lack of adequate assistance and well-trained personnel.⁴ The area where these tents are being assembled lack transportation and on-site social services support. Additionally, the selected areas are prone to flooding and the upcoming winter season makes this temporary housing option dangerous for the mental and physical well-being of individuals and family members including children.

As attention is paid to the humanitarian crisis experienced by migrant families, the City must take the following long-term steps to mitigate the housing and shelter crisis that predated this crisis and that affects thousands of low-income families of color:

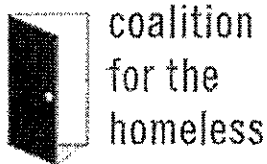
- Proceed with hiring shelter-based community coordinators as critical liaisons between families, shelters, and school personnel for all homeless families.
- Expand CityFHEPS eligibility for undocumented families and eliminate chronicity eligibility requirements to leverage the subsidy as a preventive measure and keep housing insecure families in their homes and out of shelter.
- End the 90-day rule of shelter stay, prior to City FHEPs eligibility. This illogical and costly rule further extends unnecessary lengths of stay of families with children. Instead, the City must end this rule to move families through shelter to permanent housing quickly and other restrictive

In addition to the incredible effort of community-based organizations across the city who are helping to meet the needs of migrant families, the advocacy community stands ready to actively advocate for state and federal funding to help the City address migrant families' urgent needs and provide a path to their socio-economic stability.

As an immigrant-built City, we must strive to provide equal opportunities to the recently arrived asylum seeking children and their families.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to children and families experiencing housing and socio-economic crises.

⁴ Migrant immigrant children struggle in USA tents. Retrieved from: <https://reason.com/2022/09/28/migrant-kids-in-biden-administrations-tent-camp-faced-distress-and-panic-attacks-because-of-dysfunction/>



Testimony of
Coalition for the Homeless
and
The Legal Aid Society
on
Oversight: Resources and Services for Newly Arrived Asylum Seekers
submitted to
The New York City Council Committee on Immigration
Jacquelyn Simone
Policy Director
Coalition for the Homeless
Joshua Goldfein
Staff Attorney, Homeless Rights Project
The Legal Aid Society
September 30, 2022

The Coalition for the Homeless and The Legal Aid Society (LAS) welcome this opportunity to testify before the New York City Council's Committee on Immigration regarding resources and services for newly arrived asylum seekers.

Concerns About Congregate Settings in HERRCs

As asylum seekers continue to arrive in New York City, it is imperative that any facilities created to shelter them are safe and appropriate. When City officials first notified us of their plan to open "Humanitarian Emergency Response and Relief Centers" (HERRCs), we asked them a series of questions about how these sites will operate. We are still waiting for answers to basic questions about the process and rights of people referred to these locations.

At that time, we also expressed our grave concerns about the possibility that the City would place minor children in congregate settings. The arriving migrants are highly vulnerable because they have experienced great hardship and trauma, and most arrive without having had access to proper medical care and nutrition. Forcing these vulnerable families into congregate shelters denies them safety, opportunity, and humanity. It would subject them to the same dangers endured by homeless families decades ago, when they were forced to sleep in offices, barracks-style shelters, and even the Bronx House of Detention.

We have fought for decades against the harm that arises when families with minor children are required to sleep overnight in settings where they do not have access to their own private space. There is extensive evidence in the record of the homeless families' right to shelter litigation of this harm, and that evidence was the basis for Local Laws passed by this Council to prohibit such placements. State rules and court orders also barred congregate family shelters, and the City paid \$18 million in contempt fines for violating them. We saw again after Superstorm Sandy that children were harmed by the time, however brief, they spent in disaster shelters.

Placing homeless families with children into congregate settings would be misguided and cruel. This practice would take us back decades to a tragic time when children and their families were subjected to dangerous and inhumane conditions. The documented harms of placing families with children into congregate shelters include:

- Spread of contagious diseases and aggravation of already serious medical conditions, including asthma;
- Sexual attacks on children;
- Children being exposed to inappropriate sexual behavior and violent or threatening behavior in congregate bathrooms and sleeping rooms;
- Physical exhaustion due to inability to sleep and the overwhelming fear of being sheltered with strangers;
- Missed school due to exhaustion, illness, and inability to do homework in congregate settings;
- Missed work and public assistance appointments, leading to loss of employment and benefits;
- Inability to meet special dietary needs without cooking facilities;

- Deterioration of family life and parental authority; and
- Dramatically increased rates of depression and mental health crises, including suicide attempts and suicides.

In response to our concerns, the City has said that it does not currently plan to place children in congregate settings, but has not categorically said it will not do so in the future.

We also have concerns about access for people with disabilities at the HERRCs. At the height of the pandemic, we litigated in the *Fisher* and *Butler* cases to ensure that single adults with disabilities have equal access to the programs of the NYC Department of Homeless Services (DHS). Around the time of Superstorm Sandy, the City settled a case called *BCID v. Bloomberg* and agreed to accommodate disabilities in disaster shelters, which are temporary congregate sites set up during emergencies. From the limited information we have about HERRCs, it sounds like they will be very similar to disaster shelters, so the protections the City agreed to in the *BCID* case should apply to HERRCs as well.

The Right to Shelter

The City has assured us that services at the tent HERRC sites will be voluntary and people can come and go as they see fit, and that any asylum seekers who come to a DHS intake office will be served there in the same way as any other homeless person. These two representations seem to mean that the City does not intend to limit the right to shelter for anyone who is able to reach a DHS intake office. We remain concerned about how recent arrivals who have been brought to HERRC sites in remote parts of the City will know how to access shelter if they need it and how they will get to DHS sites.

The City has told us that they do not believe that a HERRC is a shelter and it will not be operated by DHS, so it is not subject to the regulations that apply to shelters or to the consent decrees in our litigation that established the right to shelter. However, these rules and standards are not mere technical requirements – they are derived from common sense. For example, the *Callahan* Consent Decree requires that shelter residents be provided with lockable storage. No one who is given a bed in a congregate setting will be able to sleep if they do not have a safe, secure place to store their belongings at night. The HERRC program will not be successful if people do not feel that the sites meet the basic minimum standards of the City's municipal shelter system.

Many other operational questions about the new sites remain unanswered. We do not know who will be sent to the HERRCs or how they will get there. We do not know what services will be offered to single adult men and women and adult families, or even where they will sleep. We do not know how many bathrooms they will have or how the sites will accommodate people's disabilities. We do not know what information people there will be given about their right or ability to apply for shelter if they need a place to go after their brief stay at the HERRC ends or if they choose not to stay in the HERRC. The City has committed to having written procedures in place to govern operations at the HERRCs but has not yet shared any such documents with us so that we can evaluate how they will serve our clients.

Moving Shelter Residents to Permanent Housing and Ensuring Sufficient Shelter Capacity

In response to the increasing numbers of arrivals from the southern border in DHS shelters, the City has focused on expanding shelter capacity to meet its legal obligations. But the City could place new arrivals in the existing shelter system in rooms that become available when current shelter residents move to permanent housing. This would be a win for everybody: Shelter residents who move out with housing subsidies are much less likely to return to the shelter system than people who exit the system without a subsidy, so investing in improving these programs would help New Yorkers and reduce the City's costs. At the same time, the City would free up space to serve new arrivals without having to open as many new shelters.

The City could take the following steps to increase capacity, including by moving people out:

1. *Improve housing subsidy programs.* The City currently offers multiple programs that enable shelter residents to exit shelters and move to permanent housing, including CityFHEPS, EHV, SOTA, Section 8, and public housing. The City could improve these programs so that they would be more effective, reducing the length of stay in shelters.

a. *Reform bureaucratic processes that slow down shelter exits.* City and shelter staff must process subsidy applications more quickly and ensure that minor errors no longer result in months-long delays or outright denials. Such delays make it impossible for applicants with City-funded housing subsidies to compete effectively in the rental market. Reforms should include:

- i. Completing approvals and payments for leases within 30 days;
- ii. Eliminating delays in issuing checks;
- iii. Quickly completing reviews of appropriate clearance databases;
- iv. Quickly completing reviews of tenant packets; and
- v. Quickly making checks available for pick up.

b. *Eliminate unnecessary rules.* The City must eliminate unnecessary rules, such as the 90-day wait prior to being eligible for CityFHEPS, the utility allowance deduction, and rent reasonableness rules.

c. *Combat discrimination.* The City must rebuild its source of income discrimination unit and enforce the rights of voucher holders.

d. *Expand eligibility.* The City must expand eligibility for City-funded housing subsidies to more households, especially those without an eligible immigration status or mixed-status families, focusing in the first instance on long-stayers in shelters.

e. *Improve code enforcement.* The City must improve code enforcement by ensuring that oversight agencies regularly conduct thorough inspections, and that they have the capacity and expertise needed to enforce the completion of necessary repairs.

2. *Build shelter capacity by not delaying or canceling planned shelter openings.* DHS staff work hard to develop sites for new shelters, which are necessary to ensure that shelter residents can be placed in their communities of origin where they will be able to access resources that can help them leave shelters sooner, and in order to replace older sites that cannot be made accessible to people with disabilities. Neighborhood leaders and elected officials should welcome these facilities and not seek to block them, and the City must stand firm against any opposition to ensure that sufficient capacity is built.
3. *Maximize use of current capacity by using all current, accessible parts of the system.* The City needs to use the capacity it already has in other parts of the DHS shelter system rather than limiting placements to certain beds on the basis of where people are in DHS' internal assessment process. The City should also continue to use all the accessible capacity it has access to, rather than moving out of hotels and other placements voluntarily.
4. *Accommodate disabilities.* The City must ensure that disabilities are accommodated in placements and moves, as negotiated last summer in the *Butler* litigation.
5. *Adjust the supportive housing move-out process to eliminate delays.* Many shelter residents who qualify for supportive housing are waiting for months or longer to get access to permanent housing for which they qualify.
6. *Make eviction prevention services at HomeBase more available in the community.* The City is failing to make full use of its own homelessness prevention efforts because appointments are so scarce for people in the community.

Helping Recent Arrivals Establish Basic Economic Security

The migrants we are meeting every day want to work, but not all of them have work authorization in the form of an Employment Authorization Document (EAD), which Federal law restricts to certain non-citizens depending on where they are in the immigration process. At the same time, Federal restrictions also bar many new arrivals from eligibility for government benefits that would provide a means of support while they are waiting for employment authorization. The City can take the following steps to ensure their economic security while they wait for work authorization:

1. **The City should ensure new arrivals have access to benefits that they are entitled to.** Charity should be reserved for the people who are not eligible for government help.
 - a. *Offer benefits screening to new arrivals.* The City should offer recent arrivals benefits eligibility screening and assistance applying for benefits. Eligibility for Cash Assistance, SNAP, and Medicaid benefits is dependent on the new arrivals' immigration status. While not all new arrivals are eligible for benefits under current Federal and State law, many of them are, and need to be advised of their eligibility in order to take the next step of applying and obtaining benefits. For instance:
 - Federal benefits eligibility: Persons who are paroled for more than a year, and who have been granted asylum, are eligible for Federal benefits, including federally funded Cash Assistance, SNAP, and Medicaid.

- State-funded Cash Assistance and health insurance: Many more non-citizens are eligible for State-funded Cash Assistance and health insurance, including persons who have been paroled for less than a year, persons granted Temporary Protected Status, persons who have been granted deferred action, and persons who have applied for asylum and who have an Employment Authorization Document.
 - State-funded Medicaid: Many more people who have commenced the process of obtaining an immigration benefit are eligible for State-funded Medicaid.
- b. *Offer new arrivals benefits enrollment assistance.* Beyond screening for eligibility, new arrivals should be offered assistance enrolling for benefits. Assistance enrolling is necessary so that the recent arrivals do not face the barriers that other non-citizen clients have often faced when going into a Benefits Access Center alone, such as flat-out diversion, being asked if they have a Social Security Number, or being asked whether they are already a lawful permanent resident.
- c. *Implement additional measures to ensure better access to benefits for new arrivals.*
- *Re-train client-facing Human Resources Administration (HRA) staff on basic immigrant eligibility rules and policies.* HRA has policies in place that prohibit front-line workers from giving advisory opinions about eligibility to new arrivals who are seeking to apply for benefits. Staff must be trained on these policies, and the policies must be enforced to ensure that new arrivals who appear at Benefits Access Centers do not get diverted from filing applications.
 - *Implement fixes to address HRA delays in timely processing applications, including increasing HRA staffing.* The City is facing a staffing shortage at HRA, which, along with policies that should be reformed, compounds the agency's difficulties in timely processing applications and keeping client cases open. These problems affect clients regardless of immigration status, and these problems must be addressed to ensure that all clients are able to get the assistance they need from the agency in a timely way.
 - *Give people help with verification needed to prove eligibility for benefits.* Rules require applicants for HRA benefits to have certain documents that will be hard for many new arrivals to produce. The City has a legal duty to assist with verification, including accepting self-attestation and, where necessary, assisting with securing needed documentation.
 - *Ensure recent arrivals are provided the opportunity to be counseled on common concerns presented by non-citizens that could otherwise serve as barriers to applying for the help they need.* The two primary concerns likely to come from this population are public charge (President Biden just issued a new rule, but people still fear the old rule) and the confidentiality of client information. Counsel on these rules must be provided in connection with screening and enrollment assistance for benefits.

2. The City must make services available to recent arrivals in a number of different ways. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to serving the new arrivals. The City must make services available in various ways to ensure all who are eligible for assistance receive it. We offer some suggestions:

- *Issue comprehensive materials on eligibility and enrollment.* HRA should continue to train shelter providers on benefits eligibility, but they should ensure that their materials are comprehensive and that providers know how to connect residents with benefits eligibility review and assistance.
- *Set-up out-stationed workers.* The City should set up stand-alone sources of assistance on benefits screening. While shelters build their capacity to help clients with benefits, HRA can also locate “out-stationed workers” in or near shelters where people can go to determine benefits eligibility and get assistance filing their applications, rather than sending people to already overwhelmed Benefits Access Center staff.
- *Adequately staff “Welcome Centers.”* Ensure Welcome Centers offer all of these services, including out-stationed HRA workers who screen for benefits eligibility and assist with applications, and that there are also NYS Department of Health staff who can help with State-funded health insurance enrollment.

3. The City should provide DSS the staff it needs to support the recent arrivals and all New Yorkers. The agency is short-staffed. It is critical to ensure that DSS has the staff it needs, even on an emergency or temporary basis.

4. The City should advocate for sensible State and Federal reforms. The City should advocate for State and Federal emergency actions and policies that would alleviate some of the pressure the City is experiencing with respect to serving recent arrivals.

State reforms: The City should ask the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) and the Department of Health (DOH) to make more non-citizens eligible for Cash Assistance and Medicaid. Currently, DOH considers many more non-citizens to be “Permanently Residing Under Color of Law” (PRUCOL) and eligible for Medicaid than those categories of non-citizens that OTDA considers PRUCOL and eligible for Cash Assistance. For example, asylum applicants are eligible for Medicaid but not Cash Assistance (unless they have an Employment Authorization Document). U-Visa and Special Immigrant Juvenile Status applicants are eligible for Medicaid, but not Cash Assistance. OTDA has the discretion to expand eligibility.

Federal reforms: The City should also seek the following changes to existing policies and procedures from the Federal government:

- a. *Issuing a rule that would give asylum applicants the opportunity to achieve economic security by making them immediately eligible for employment authorization, without having to wait.* The Department of Homeland Security

should make asylees eligible for an EAD immediately, by amending 8 C.F.R. §§ 208.7 and 274a.12(c)(8) to remove the 150-day and 180-day waiting periods.

- i. *EAD is needed to work.* An EAD enables asylum applicants to work to support themselves while they are waiting for a determination on their claim for asylum and to start building a secure future in the U.S.
- ii. *EAD is needed to access State assistance in New York.* In New York, an EAD makes an asylum applicant eligible for Cash Assistance, which can help families stabilize. Families will also become eligible for certain housing subsidies that are proven to prevent and end homelessness.
- iii. *EAD should not be subject to the asylum clock.* The asylum “clock” must be eliminated. Enabling asylum applicants to obtain EADs immediately would mean doing away with the asylum EAD clock. Under current rules, asylum applicants must wait 150 days before they can file for an EAD, and they cannot be issued an EAD until a minimum of 180 days have passed. Some applicants are required to wait even longer because a continuance of the applicant’s immigration court case, even to obtain counsel or for other necessary reasons, stops the clock, sometimes adding months to the time they must wait to obtain an EAD.
- c. *The Department of Homeland Security should direct Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to refrain from seeking removal of the new arrivals.* Currently, ICE is routinely seeking removal for the new arrivals. Many have claims to asylum and/or other immigration benefits, and seeking removal is unnecessary and expensive for all. The Department of Homeland Security could allow these new arrivals to seek asylum affirmatively before the USCIS Asylum Office, rather than defensively before the Immigration Court.
- d. *The Federal government must make a multi-year investment in funding for legal counsel.* As long as new arrivals are coming to New York and are subject to removal proceedings, which take years to resolve in the courts, legal organizations need increased funding to meet the demand for services. The demand will continue for the next few years, as thousands of the new arrivals, all or most of whom will need counsel, will be in removal proceedings. This investment would acknowledge that meeting the need for increased legal services capacity requires the hiring and training of new attorneys and advocates, which takes time.
- e. *Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and/or ICE must discontinue the use of false addresses on noncitizens’ immigration paperwork.* Immigration officials at the southern border, whether CBP, ICE, or both, must immediately discontinue the practice of listing false addresses on noncitizens’ immigration paperwork. False addresses will lead to noncitizens failing to receive notice of

their hearings, with resultant removal orders entered against them in their absence.

Conclusion

We thank the Immigration Committee for the opportunity to testify on this important topic, and for the Council's dedication to ensuring that newly arrived asylum seekers have access to appropriate resources and services.

About The Legal Aid Society and Coalition for the Homeless

The Legal Aid Society: The Legal Aid Society (LAS), the nation's oldest and largest not-for-profit legal services organization, is more than a law firm for clients who cannot afford to pay for counsel. It is an indispensable component of the legal, social, and economic fabric of New York City – passionately advocating for low-income individuals and families across a variety of civil, criminal, and juvenile rights matters, while also fighting for legal reform. This dedication to justice for all New Yorkers continues during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Legal Aid Society has performed this role in City, State, and federal courts since 1876. It does so by capitalizing on the diverse expertise, experience, and capabilities of more than 2,000 attorneys, social workers, paralegals, and support and administrative staff. Through a network of borough, neighborhood, and courthouse offices in 26 locations in New York City, LAS provides comprehensive legal services in all five boroughs of New York City for clients who cannot afford to pay for private counsel.

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

The Legal Aid Society's unique value is an ability to go beyond any one case to create more equitable outcomes for individuals and broader, more powerful systemic change for society as a whole. In addition to the annual caseload of 300,000 individual cases and legal matters, LAS's law reform representation for clients benefits more than 1.7 million low-income families and individuals in New York City and the landmark rulings in many of these cases have a State-wide and national impact.

The Legal Aid Society is uniquely positioned to speak on issues of law and policy as they relate to homeless New Yorkers. The Legal Aid Society is counsel to the Coalition for the Homeless and for homeless women and men in the *Callahan* and *Eldredge* cases. The Legal Aid Society is also counsel in the *McCain/Boston* litigation in which a final judgment requires the provision of lawful shelter to homeless families. LAS, in collaboration with Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler, LLC, filed *C.W. v. City of New York*, a federal class action lawsuit on behalf of runaway

and homeless youth in New York City. Legal Aid, along with institutional plaintiffs Coalition for the Homeless and Center for Independence of the Disabled-NY (CIDNY), settled *Butler v. City of New York* on behalf of all disabled New Yorkers experiencing homelessness. Also, during the pandemic, The Legal Aid Society along with Coalition for the Homeless continued to support homeless New Yorkers through litigation, including *E.G. v. City of New York*, Federal class action litigation initiated to ensure WiFi access for students in DHS and HRA shelters, as well as *Fisher v. City of New York*, a lawsuit filed in New York State Supreme Court to ensure homeless single adults gain access to private hotel rooms instead of congregate shelters during the pandemic.

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

The Coalition operates 11 direct-services programs that offer vital services to homeless, at-risk, and low-income New Yorkers. These programs also demonstrate effective, long-term, scalable solutions and include: Permanent housing for formerly homeless families and individuals living with HIV/AIDS; job-training for homeless and low-income women; and permanent housing for formerly homeless families and individuals. Our summer sleep-away camp and after-school program help hundreds of homeless children each year. The Coalition's mobile soup kitchen, which usually distributes 800 to 1,000 nutritious hot meals each night to homeless and hungry New Yorkers on the streets of Manhattan and the Bronx, had to increase our meal production and distribution by as much as 40 percent and has distributed PPE and emergency supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, our Crisis Services Department assists more than 1,000 homeless and at-risk households each month with eviction prevention, individual advocacy, referrals for shelter and emergency food programs, and assistance with public benefits as well as basic necessities such as diapers, formula, work uniforms, and money for medications and groceries. In response to the pandemic, we are operating a special Crisis Hotline (1-888-358-2384) for homeless individuals who need immediate help finding shelter or meeting other critical needs.

The Coalition was founded in concert with landmark right-to-shelter litigation filed on behalf of homeless men and women (*Callahan v. Carey* and *Eldredge v. Koch*) and remains a plaintiff in these now consolidated cases. In 1981, the City and State entered into a consent decree in *Callahan* through which they agreed: "The City defendants shall provide shelter and board to each homeless man who applies for it provided that (a) the man meets the need standard to qualify for the home relief program established in New York State; or (b) the man by reason of physical, mental or social dysfunction is in need of temporary shelter." The *Eldredge* case extended this legal requirement to homeless single women. The *Callahan* consent decree and the *Eldredge* case also guarantee basic standards for shelters for homeless men and women. Pursuant to the decree, the Coalition serves as court-appointed monitor of municipal shelters for homeless single adults, and the City has also authorized the Coalition to monitor other facilities serving homeless families. In 2017, the Coalition, fellow institutional plaintiff Center for Independence

of the Disabled – New York, and homeless New Yorkers with disabilities were represented by The Legal Aid Society and pro-bono counsel White & Case in the settlement of *Butler v. City of New York*, which is designed to ensure that the right to shelter includes accessible accommodations for those with disabilities, consistent with Federal, State, and local laws. During the pandemic, the Coalition has worked with The Legal Aid Society to support homeless New Yorkers, including through the *E.G. v. City of New York* Federal class action litigation initiated to ensure WiFi access for students in DHS and HRA shelters, as well as *Fisher v. City of New York*, a lawsuit filed in New York State Supreme Court to ensure homeless single adults gain access to private hotel rooms instead of congregate shelters during the pandemic.



Thank you to the New York City Council's Committee of Immigration for holding a hearing on issues impacting newly arrived asylum seekers. My name is Oksana Mironova and I am a senior policy analyst at the Community Service Society of New York (CSS), a leading nonprofit that promotes economic opportunity for all New Yorkers. CSS uses research, advocacy, and direct services to champion a more equitable city and state.

New York City's plan to house people seeking asylum in an area that is flood-prone, lacking in basic resources, and disconnected from the rest of the city is unconscionable. While this is a crisis manufactured by a broken immigration system that the city has no control over, we do have control over local housing policy, which can help mitigate some of its externalities.

We have been closely tracking New York's housing landscape for decades. We know that well-funded rental assistance programs can act as a key mechanism for helping New Yorkers find permanent homes. If the city were more successful in helping people experiencing homelessness move into permanent housing, shelter stays would be shorter, our shelter population would be much smaller, and we could more easily absorb an unexpected rise in need like the one we're experiencing today.

CityFHEPS is the city's rental assistance program. And, while the city has made strides to improve the functionality of this program, there are several administrative, enforcement, and funding issues that slow it down. These include:

- **Eligibility:** Many households need CityFHEPS vouchers, yet strict rules limit who qualifies. Undocumented New Yorkers are unjustly excluded from receiving CityFHEPS vouchers, leading many to remain in the shelter system for years with no clear options for exit.
- **Delays:** It often takes months for someone with a CityFHEPS voucher to secure and move into an apartment. Minor mistakes cause entire applications to be denied or delayed, which forces households to languish in shelter for months or even years.
- **Unfair rules:** Unnecessary limitations reduce the number of homes available to people in shelter and make it difficult for voucher holders to secure apartments. Under one rule, the city deducts a "utility allowance" from allowable rents, reducing the maximum rent a voucher holder's apartment can charge, and limiting the apartments they can choose from. Another rule allows the city to reject apartments where the rent is deemed "unreasonable" in comparison to other rents in the immediate neighborhood. This comparison happens late in the review process, is not a legal requirement, and makes it extremely difficult for households to find apartments, particularly in a tight rental market.
- **Discrimination:** Many landlords do not want to accept vouchers, and therefore refuse to rent apartments to CityFHEPS households. This is called source of income discrimination, which is illegal. Unfortunately, New York City lacks the resources needed to combat this problem.



The NYC Human Rights Commission's Source of Income Unit is supposed to represent voucher holders experiencing discrimination but is still extremely understaffed.

- **Poor apartment conditions:** Landlords tend to do less upkeep and care for buildings where most tenants have vouchers. At the same time, substandard apartments tend to have higher vacancy rates, and are thus more likely to be on the market at prices eligible for CityFHEPS vouchers. This often results in CityFHEPS households settling for substandard and unsafe housing.

In fiscal year 2021 the average shelter stay was 483 days for single adults, 520 days for families with children, and 773 days for adult families. Simple administrative reforms can make the CityFHEPS process move faster, minimizing the backlog of applicants, and creating more space for asylum seekers to move through the shelter system.

There are several things the legislature can do to make it easier for homeless New Yorkers to access and use CityFHEPS vouchers, including:

- Reform bureaucratic processes to make sure that City and shelter staff quickly process applications and that minor errors no longer result in long delays or outright denials.
- Eliminate unnecessary rules, such as the utility allowance and rent reasonableness rules.
- Simplify eligibility standards, allowing mixed-status and undocumented families to apply for CityFHEPS (undocumented families often have the longest shelter stays).
- Combat discrimination by rebuilding the City's source of income discrimination unit and making sure that it actually enforces the rights of CityFHEPS households.
- Improve code enforcement by ensuring that oversight agencies regularly conduct thorough inspections, and that they have the capacity and expertise needed to enforce necessary repairs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. If you have any questions about this testimony or CSS's research, please contact me at omironova@cssny.org.

New York City Council, Committee on Immigration

Oversight-Resources and Shelter for New Arrived Asylum Seekers

September 30, 2022

My name is David Miranda, and I am the Senior Staff Attorney at Covenant House New York (CHNY.) I would like to thank the New York City Council Committee on Immigration and especially Chair Hanif for the opportunity to testify today. I am pleased to be here on behalf of our new Executive Director of Covenant House New York, Julie Farber, and our entire Covenant House community.

At CHNY, we serve youth ages 16 to 24 who are experiencing homelessness. We are the nation's largest, non-profit agency specifically dedicated to serving homeless, runaway and trafficked youth. During this past year, CHNY served more than 1,600 young people in our programs. On a nightly basis, we provide shelter to approximately 200 young people, including, LGBTQ youth and pregnant women and mothers with their children as well as survivors of human trafficking/commercial sexual exploitation. Our youth are primarily people of color and more than a third have spent time in the foster care system. Many of our young people have experienced abuse or neglect at the hands of parents or other caregivers, and a disproportionately high percentage of our youth struggle with the pervasive impacts of trauma, mental health issues, and substance abuse. We provide young people with food, shelter, clothing, medical care, mental health and substance abuse services, legal services, high school equivalency classes and other educational and job-training programs. All of these services help young people overcome the trauma of homelessness and abuse and move toward stability, security and a successful future free from exploitation.

Influx of Immigrant Youth

We are all aware that NYC is in the middle of an immigration influx of people from South and Central America, primarily Venezuela. At Covenant House NY, we are proud to be on the frontlines helping these vulnerable young people by providing food, safety, shelter, immigration legal services, mental health and medical care, among a variety of other services. These services are provided by our dedicated and caring staff who welcome these young people and work to allay their fears and make them feel comfortable and safe, while allowing them to process the trauma of their journey. We are grateful to be able to help, but we are finding that the situation is stretching the available resources for all of us that work with runaway and homeless youth, and particularly in the area of immigration legal services.

Covenant House NY's proximity to Port Authority and our dedicated youth beds and services leads CHNY to be an obvious choice for many of these young immigrants. Those who are

already staying with us will go to Port Authority to meet the arriving buses and bring back groups of youth in the hopes that we have available beds. Other times, youth are first referred to churches or shelters in the adult homeless system. Caring staff at those shelters will notice that the client is young and may fare better at CHNY and will make a referral to us.

Our legal services department first noticed an increase in immigrant youth in the early summer of 2022, prior to the arrival of buses filled with immigrants in recent weeks. By the middle of the summer, twelve young people from Venezuela were residing in our mid-town shelter. In comparison, in the past we had a handful of undocumented youth in need of immigration legal services throughout an entire year. Since the buses began arriving, we now have 38 immigrant youth from Central and South America, the majority of whom are Venezuelan. Most of these young people are fleeing persecution (some for their LGBTQ+ status, others for their or their family members' participation in political protests) parental abandonment and starvation. Almost all of the immigrant youth we are seeing are young men. We believe that young women may find the journey to the US too dangerous and filled with the risk for sexual assault and human trafficking by cartels.

Although we are pleased to be able to support these vulnerable young people, our number of beds is finite, and we are concerned about not being able to meet all of the needs that exist, whether among migrant youth or NYC youth. Prior to July, the number of young people who we needed to make referrals elsewhere because we were at capacity was in the single digits. This month, there were 58 youth we were unable to shelter.

Service Needs/Spanish Speaking Staff and Programming

Our Spanish speaking staff are doing everything they can to help at all hours of the day and night. We have implemented Spanish speaking mental health groups and life skills workshops. We have started classes to familiarize these young people with New York, including how to navigate the subway/transportation system and understand US currency. Unfortunately, a man was able to convince one of our immigrant youth that a \$100 bill he had was worth a \$1 and the cost of an ice-cream. In response, we immediately started our currency workshops. The hearts of the Covenant House and wider RHY community have gone out to these young people.

However, more resources are needed in order to support targeted services that can be delivered by Spanish speaking staff for these young people.

Immigration Legal Services

My role at CHNY is to provide direct legal representation for our youth. Since the closing of the Peter Chiccino Youth Project at the Urban Justice Center, I think I may be the only lawyer in NYC exclusively dedicated to helping young people experiencing homelessness. Navigating city transportation and services is extremely difficult/overwhelming for youth in crisis. That's why I'm here-so youth can get help right where they live. Until recently, my caseload included public benefits, orders of protection, the collateral consequences of criminal convictions, name changes for trans youth and trafficking survivors and whatever other issues a youth experiencing homeless who drops by my office might have.

In other years, we would refer our small number of youth needing immigration legal services to community partners with an expertise in immigration law, such as the Door. However, the Door now has over 300 immigrant youth on its waiting list, and no legal services agency in NYC that we are aware of is currently taking additional immigration cases. When I call Action New York looking for legal referrals, we are usually told that the only immigration help that is available without a waitlist is the HELP desk in immigration court.

Timeliness can be crucial in these cases as immigrants have only one year from entry into the US to claim asylum, and young people must have Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) paperwork into family court before the age of 21, which many of the youth are quickly turning.

Of the immigrant youth, a majority of these young people have been paroled into the US and may need accompaniment to their ICE check ins. Many have strong asylum claims and most should be eligible for SIJS.

The City Bar Justice Center has also generously stepped in to run immigration clinics at CHNY. Their model of training and supervising corporate lawyers to handle immigration issues will greatly expand the number of young people who will be able to receive high quality, pro bono immigration legal services. I am proud not only to work at CHNY but also to be part of a homeless youth and legal services community that works together to properly care for and serve vulnerable newcomers.

Yet, even with all of this help from community partners, the resources are far from sufficient. CHNY and our colleague organizations need additional resources for civil legal services.

Young people under the age of 25 have unique developmental needs that have been compounded by the trauma they have experienced in their home countries and on their treacherous journey to the US. In conclusion, dedicated youth immigrant beds and services, especially immigration legal services, and appropriate translation and mental health services are urgently needed. Appropriate resources will enable these young immigrants to reach their full potential so they can both legally stay and thrive in their new country. CHNY is on the frontlines of this crisis and here to partner with the city. Additional beds and resources are necessary to meet the needs of this crisis, and to model to the world the right way to welcome abandoned youth and asylum seekers.

I again thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

David Miranda

Senior Staff Attorney, Covenant House New York. jbigelsen@covenanthouse.org

Testimony re: Asylum seekers in New York City

Submitted to:

Committee on Immigration

Submitted by:

Frankie Miranda, President of the Hispanic Federation

September 30, 2022

Thank you, Chair Hanif and all other members of the Committee on Immigration for allowing me to present this testimony on behalf of the Hispanic Federation; a non-profit organization seeking to empower and advance the Hispanic community, support Hispanic families, and strengthen Latino institutions through direct service programs and legislative advocacy. The largest Latino umbrella organization in the nation, the Federation collaborates with a network of 500 nonprofits in 41 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. More than 174 of our members and partners are here in the city.

I am here today to discuss how we can continue to support asylum seekers and migrants in New York City.

Background

In the beginning of 2022, Texas Governor Abbott initiated a political stunt by busing immigrants from the Texas border to New York City. Governor Abbott cites that he is sending migrants that enter Texas to democratic sanctuary cities to provide relief to border communities. Additionally, he states that migrants will face a better quality of life in democratic cities that have the capacity to care for others. While it is true that New York City has always committed to providing services to those who seek it, we cannot ignore that the treatment of migrants in Texas is horrific. Once in Texas, migrants are often forced onto the buses and given very little information as to where they are going and not given a choice to decide where their new home should be. Despite the difficulties that migrants are facing, New York has maintained its promise

to provide asylum seekers the resources and support that they need to not only survive, but also thrive. In recent months, approximately 14,600 migrants have arrived in New York City, and about 11,000 have ended up in the homeless shelter system.¹

HF's Presence

Many individuals arriving to the United States are escaping civil strife, environmental disasters, extreme poverty and physical violence. They deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. Community based organizations, pillars within their communities, have been critical to providing culturally and linguistically competent social services, legal representation, and advocating on behalf of this population to ensure that they are treated with the dignity that they deserve.

For years, Hispanic Federation has served this valuable and vulnerable community. In 2019, when we started to see a migrant surge at the border, Hispanic Federation sent a team to both the Texas and Mexico border to visit respite centers, camps, and bus depots to see how we could best serve the community. From that, we created the Latino Immigrant Families Together (LIFT) Fund to provide resources to respite centers providing services to this population. In 2021, we heard an increased demand for immigration legal service providers throughout the nation, especially for those seeking asylum. In response, Hispanic Federation created *Caminos de Esperanza*, a program that works to expand legal services of eleven non-profit immigration legal service providers.

During this summer, Hispanic Federation staff and I traveled to Port Authority on many mornings to join the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs to welcome those being bused from Texas. At Port Authority, non-profit organizations and city staff were the first people to welcome these individuals, and offered resources such as personal hygiene products and clothing. I saw first-hand the importance of culturally and linguistically relevant assistance. This group was able

¹ "New York mayor's migrant tents give him more time to meet shelter mandate" *Politico*, <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/09/27/tent-centers-give-adams-more-time-to-meet-homeless-shelter-requirements-00059130>

to connect these individuals with essential resources, such as health insurance, shelter, food, and legal services.

This vulnerable population has endured both mentally and physically exhausting journeys. Specifically, I recall a conversation that I had with a family of four from Venezuela upon their arrival. The family had two young children and traveled through four different countries and jungles on foot over the course of three months. By the time they arrived in New York they had nothing but the clothes on their backs. The family persevered through their journey and told me how they specifically wanted to come to New York. They told me about how they heard stories that New Yorkers would welcome them with open arms regardless of immigration status. This is just one of many stories that I have heard. As New Yorkers, it is imperative that we continue to foster this sense of hope for others and provide a community of care and respect for everyone who arrives.

As I highlighted, Hispanic Federation has been at the frontlines, providing direct assistance to migrants. We have been invited to join other community-based organizations at the city's resource center to ensure that migrants are being enrolled in health insurance plans. Our navigators work with over 40 individuals a day to ensure that they can find a health plan that fits their needs. We recognize the support that other organizations can provide, and we have responded quickly by providing \$100,000 in aid towards organizations that are also on the frontlines supporting migrants. Our grantees are providing shelter, food, clothing, medical care, transportation, and more to migrants arriving in our city. They are essential to bridge the gaps that city services cannot provide, and we are truly thankful for their work.

Over and over again, Hispanic Federation has been able to connect with on-the-ground service providers to not only understand the issues that their clients and members are facing, but also support their efforts. Community-based organizations are always the first to organize and provide services during short term and long-term crisis. We must recognize their importance and continue to support these establishments.

Issues being faced

Currently, we find ourselves in a state of crisis. The number one priority has been to ensure that every asylum seeker has access to stable housing. Many migrants entering New York City do not have relatives or a place to shelter in New York. According to the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, many shelters are reaching capacity and are limited in their ability to accommodate everyone who requires assistance. The administration has opened 39 new emergency homeless shelters, largely in hotels. New York is in the process of setting up a 1,000-bed heated tent as a temporary shelter for adult asylum seekers. What's more, we have seen and migrants have reported hostile sentiments from others, making their transition harder.

Another issue that migrants face is the lack of accessible and affordable legal representation. Most people coming into New York City do not have direct legal representation or know where to find it. Nonprofits that provide no or low-cost legal services are working extremely hard to meet this growing need, but there are long waiting lists to receive these services. Moreover, many incoming migrants do not have the means to pay for private legal representation. On average, legal aid can start at around \$16,000.

Many migrants also need medical care but are not familiar with 1) which services they are eligible for, and 2) where to find them. Hispanic Federation is working arduously alongside our diverse and trusted member agencies to ensure that we can meet this population's basic needs. Community based organizations serve as the bridge to these critical resources and must receive resources in order to continue meeting the growing needs of these asylum seekers.

Recommendations

The City Council and Mayor's Office can lead by expanding resources and partnerships with these trusted community-based organizations to deliver culturally and linguistically competent care. Migrants deserve the right to receive information in their native language, and these community-based organizations have proven their ability to efficiently connect with high-need individuals and provide services. We encourage city government to minimize duplication of

efforts by partnering with us and our network to ensure that incoming migrants continue to receive timely, high-quality care. We hope city government can provide additional investments for these organizations to meet the influx of asylum seekers and help them achieve the quality of life they fought so hard to obtain.

Additionally, while New York City must remain committed to providing services to those who enter, we must also be mindful of the wants and needs of migrants. I have spoken to many people who wish to reside in other states to be re-united with family or loved ones. Given this, we urge the City Council to allocate resources to support individuals who wish to purchase tickets to relocate and settle in other states and municipalities. These individuals deserve the right to choose where they want to pursue their American dream and as New Yorkers, we should support them.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony. We look forward to continue working with you to provide support for migrants and will continue to advocate to ensure that these migrants are being treated with dignity and respect.



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Homeless Services United's Written Testimony Submitted to

The NYC Council Committee on Immigration Hearing on Services and Resources for Asylum Seekers on Sept 30th, 2022

My name is Eric Lee and I'm the director of policy and planning at Homeless Services United. Homeless Services United (HSU) is a coalition representing mission-driven, homeless service providers in New York City. HSU advocates for expansion of affordable housing and prevention services and for immediate access to safe, decent, emergency and transitional housing, outreach and drop-in services for homeless New Yorkers. Thank you, Chair Hanif and members of the Immigration Committee, for allowing me to testify today.

HSU is grateful to the Council for its steadfast leadership on immigration rights and commitment to serving all New Yorkers regardless of their immigration status. Through your efforts, New York City continues to be a beacon of hope and protection for families and individuals seeking a better life. While the immediate need is daunting, the Human Services Safety Net can meet the demand with key investments and policy changes.

We are grateful to Chair Hanif and Members of the City Council for defending and reaffirming the right to shelter in New York City. Every person in New York City is afforded this right, regardless of their immigration status. While we can appreciate the difficult task before the Mayor, **we must continue to uphold this right for EVERY person within New York City.**

There are many unanswered questions about how the Mayor's proposed tent facilities will operate. First and foremost is whether the tents will meet the minimum standards of care associated with the City's legal mandate of emergency shelter, and what oversight authorities and inspections will be used to ensure they are safe and appropriate for the people housed within. As the DHS shelter system is available to everyone regardless of their immigration status, we would like to understand how and when City workers are messaging to migrants and asylum seekers that they have the right to enter DHS shelter, and what the process looks like for that individual or family. (e.g., are they being allowed to depart the bus in Port Authority, is the City redirecting buses to Orchard beach and not allowing anyone off beforehand, is the City offering transportation to DHS intake facilities directly from Port Authority?) Families and individuals should be provided the option to enter DHS shelter immediately upon arrival in New York City, and not compelled to go to the tent facilities through either coercion or omission and must be allowed to leave whenever they so choose.

To appropriately assist the thousands of new unhoused New Yorkers the City should continue to rely on the Department of Homeless Services' adult and family with children shelter systems to stand-up emergency procurement shelter sites which have established oversight monitors and habitability standards and inspections, as well as required standards of care and on-site services. Rather than creating an outdoor tent facility within a flood zone during hurricane season, HSU recommends the City continue to locate empty blocks of hotel rooms, stand up traditional shelters or, convert other suitable structures which can quickly be stood up to meet the immediate need, while utilizing their creativity to locate underutilized sites such as college dorms, vacant offices with shower facilities, and gyms which could be quickly repurposed through DHS emergency procurement contracts.

While no one could have foretold the migrant crisis, the City's shelter capacity crisis could have been avoided altogether, as contributing factors were completely within the City's ability to address, including longer lengths of stays within shelter due to bureaucratic delays processing rental assistance and public benefits cases, lack of new shelter capacity because of NIMBYism, and delays in DHS contract registration and reimbursement process which weakened non-profit providers' ability to respond to the City's request for additional sites.

While the Department of Homeless Services' (DHS) shelter capacity is straining to accommodate thousands of asylum seekers, **the City's homeless services safety net can meet the current and future demand by focusing on three priorities:**

- 1. Bolster eviction prevention and legal services to meet overwhelming demand and avoid even more shelter entry**
- 2. Establish a reliable DHS shelter pipeline to create purpose-built service-rich shelters and normalize fiscal operations of DHS-contracted programs**
- 3. Expedite placements from shelter into permanent housing to shorten time spent homeless and free up space in shelters that we already have by quickly moving people into housing**

Making these changes will result in the system operating more effectively which will help DSS and DHS meet savings targets required by the Mayor's PEG without undercutting the homeless and social services safety net during an economic downturn will diminish services when more people must rely on them. Given recent reports on the diminished number of staff at City agencies including DHS and HRA, we are concerned that simply eliminating vacant positions will permanently hobble units that should be enhanced to ensure that New Yorkers experiencing homelessness have timely access to assistance to regain permanent housing.

1. Bolster eviction prevention and legal services to meet overwhelming demand

Renters in New York City are needlessly losing their homes and entering shelter because of the overwhelming number of households in arrears and the relentless pace of housing court cases set by the Office of Court Administration (OCA). Staff at Homebase programs are heroically trying to help as many households at imminent risk of homelessness as possible, but they are burning out in record numbers. Homebase staff have extremely high caseloads often encompassing the workload and role of multiple people. **One Homebase program reported a 52% staff attrition rate from June 2021 to 2022.** Homebase programs have been tasked with providing multiple additional supports beyond their original scope, with little to no additional resources to accomplish the work.

Homebase now provides access to rental assistance vouchers like CityFHEPS and Emergency Housing Vouchers, but without funding in their contracts to hire specialized staff for those roles, existing staff must split their time between cases at urgent risk of losing their housing, and non-emergency cases. Currently Brooklyn and Bronx Homebase already report having appointment waitlists stretching 6 weeks or later for non-emergency cases. **To accomplish the Mayor's Housing Plan vision of upstreaming**

prevention to stabilize more households sooner, the City must invest additional money to hire additional staff to do the work. One way in which this could be accomplished is if the City funded an RFP to develop dedicated housing units with Homebase offices, with staff focused on assisting tenants apply for rental vouchers and search for housing in the community, which would allow other Homebase staff to refocus on assisting the most urgent cases at risk of losing their homes.

To stop more households from needlessly losing their housing, the Office of Court Administration (OCA) must slow down their pace of court cases to allow Universal Access to Counsel (UAC) providers to meet the demand for legal representation. **OCA has been deaf to pleas from legal providers pleas to slowdown which WILL mean households who are eligible for legal representation in housing court will be forced to represent themselves in court.** The Council recognized the importance of legal representation when it created the historic right to counsel for tenants in housing court, and it is unconscionable that households are being denied access to that right because the Courts refuse to proceed forth in a manageable manner. UAC providers are trying to hire as many new housing lawyers as quickly as possible, but it is not something which can be accomplished overnight. There is a finite pool of eligible applicants, and the currently unsustainable workload is a serious deterrent. UAC providers are currently working at capacity and have been instructed by HRA to start utilizing waitlists without any guidance how to manage them. Legal providers are unable to provide estimated wait times because they are assigning cases to the next attorney that becomes available, with this all-hands-on deck approach further contributing towards burnout and staff vacancies. Without a way to give UAC providers enough time to work through the backlog of cases and reduce caseloads, the City's Right To Counsel is in serious jeopardy.

In addition, The Human Rights Commission's Source of Income (SOI) Unit saw a net reduction in the total headcount in the FY23 budget, and while we are grateful to the Council for pushing back against the City's more severe headcount reduction, the SOI unit needs additional funding to restore and expand its ability to bring cases against discriminatory landlords and brokers as well as enough staff to reach out to landlords in real-time to help make sure prospective tenants do not lose a unit because of discrimination. Without the ability to bring cases to trial, voucher holders will continue to be discriminated and unable to have a fair chance at housing.

2. Establish a reliable DHS shelter pipeline to create purpose-built service-rich shelters

As HSU testified at the General Welfare hearing on August 9th, 2022 regarding the impact of the migrant crisis on the City's DHS shelter system, the City's homeless shelter capacity crisis is due in part to the City's willingness to cancel the opening of new purpose-built shelters because of NIMBYism and political opposition. If and until the City is willing to stop allowing a vocal minority to dictate where people experiencing homelessness can exercise their right to shelter, the City will have to rely on costly hotels with emergency procurement contracts to meet surge capacity.

While the City is currently struggling to find placements for thousands of migrant households seeking refuge in the US, the unexpected surge could be managed if the City is able to establish a timely and reliable pipeline for new purpose-built shelters staffed by compassionate staff trained in trauma-

informed services. The City at all times should be planning a minimum of a five-percent vacancy rate to be able to meet unforeseen upticks in their front door, and a reliable shelter pipeline would allow the DHS system to close down larger and more problematic and dilapidated sites. People experiencing street homelessness often cite security and building conditions as reasons to not enter shelter, and by creating new client-centered smaller facilities located closer to their community, DHS can address those concerns and convince more individuals to come inside.

Our non-profit members want to be good partners to the City and provide quality, compassionate care to both new and lifelong New Yorkers, but to be able to do so, DHS-contracted non-profits must be in a healthy enough financial position to be able to absorb the risk that new contracts entail. While the Mayor recently declared victory against non-profit contract delays, DHS shelter providers are still struggling with contract registration and amendment delays, as evidenced by the few bids submitted for the emergency RFP for 600-unit shelter for migrants and too few to meet the demand of the call for an additional 5,000 units. Last time DHS had significant contract delays under Mayor de Blasio, the most seasoned and experienced homeless services non-profits who were floating millions of dollars in delayed reimbursements from the City could not take on the additional risk of new contracts, cracking the door for less experienced and proven providers to take on huge City contracts which have been the focus of recent scandals.

Defining fiscal health of DHS-contracted non-profits is not limited to our need for timely contracting and payment but also, embodied by the strength of our non-profit workforce who are woefully underpaid and overburdened. Just as our eviction prevention staff are struggling with high caseloads and burnout, our homeless services staff are also facing challenging situations with too few resources and headcount to meet the need head-on. While the City authorized non-profits to use contract accruals for staff incentives and hiring/retention bonuses, many providers are still awaiting the actual approval from the City to pay out their staff. Many shelter providers are also awaiting registered contract amendments to pay Prevailing Wage for their shelter security guards, as well as amendments for programs. Other staff such as case managers and social workers haven't seen meaningful wage increases in years despite rampant inflation and crushing student debt and are now questioning their decision to work in social services with all the associated stress and vicarious trauma given their salaries are barely higher than minimum wage. The City must normalize the fiscal operations of homeless services programs and pay our staff, to ensure qualified and experienced non-profit providers stand ready to answer future calls for shelter services.

3. **Expedite placements from shelter into permanent housing to shorten time spent homeless**

Housing resources like rental assistance vouchers and supportive and affordable housing options are critical to addressing homelessness, but administrative delays and bureaucratic red tape needlessly prolong the time a household must languish in shelter before being rehoused.

The supportive housing referral process needs additional reforms and we are encouraged by new pilots that allow housing providers to accept referrals directly to fill vacancies they have with qualified clients

immediately, until longer lasting reforms are achieved, we recommend expanding this pilot into additional sites to more quickly fill vacancies.

The Emergency Housing Voucher Program (EHV) continues to be beleaguered by bureaucratic delays that are preventing rapid utilization of these vouchers leaving hundreds of households languishing in shelters. Inspections need to be expedited and NYCHA must use every tool at its disposal to accelerate approvals of rental packages to allow families to sign leases. At last report there were over 1,000 packages pending with the Housing Authority, the majority of which are for households currently residing in shelters. Rapidly approving the packages currently pending would create more capacity in the DHS shelter system than the tent facility that the City intends to open.

Local rental assistance vouchers like CityFHEPS and State FHEPS are fraught with processing delays, stringent eligibility criteria, and rules which erode the buying power of the voucher. Rental Assistance Vouchers can be improved for New Yorkers in the following ways:

- a) **Commit additional funding to bolster headcounts within DHS and HRA units responsible for processing rental assistance applications and public benefits access and rebudgeting, and one-shot deals.**
 - i) DHS utilizes a pool of staff to review CityFHEPS applications, but individual staff are not assigned specific applications, meaning that there is no individual staff accountability on DHS' side to ensure that a packet progresses forward in a timely manner, and shelter staff lack the ability to reach out to the reviewer to workshop an equitable solution for individual cases which have complicated situations and considerations. Instead, packets are returned multiple times, sometimes for insignificant clerical corrections. We understand the immense workload of DHS reviewers given the number of applications being submitted on a daily basis, and **we strongly urge the City to fund DHS to bolster their headcount to process applications in a more collaborative way with shelter provider staff.**
 - ii) **HRA needs sufficient headcount to process public assistance benefits and rebudgeting, as well as CityFHEPS and State FHEPS applications in a timelier manner.**
 - (1) While HRA developed the ACCESSHRA application to create a streamlined virtual platform for New Yorkers to apply for benefits, it is not be a replacement for trained experts to assist clients face-to-face to resolve their benefits and housing concerns. Eviction prevention and legal providers report delays with Public Assistance Interviews which precludes their ability to process rental assistance applications. Under the current process, PA applicants must submit their documentation online or at an HRA Center, and then wait at home for days for a phone interview from an HRA worker which they can easily miss or never receive at all. If so, they need to call a general number to "reschedule" a PA interview, which will also not have a designated time or date. Households in crisis at risk of eviction or already in shelter need timely access to public benefits. **HRA should be empowered to hire additional frontline staff to create manageable workloads and allow them to schedule appointments and process applications in a timely manner.** With the accelerating pace of Housing Court dockets

and rapidly filling shelters, the City must ensure that people in urgent need of assistance are not left waiting.

- (2) **HRA should be empowered to hire sufficient staff to be able to process CityFHEPS applications and complete lease-ups within a 30-day timeframe.** Shelter providers report being asked to resubmit CityFHEPS paperwork including updated signed leases because the package was not processed quickly enough by the City and documents grew “stale”. A household should not be forced to wait in shelter because DHS and HRA do not have enough hands to process applications in a timely manner. Moreover, these delays negatively impact landlord interest in renting to our clients because they are losing money once the application takes longer than the 30-day unit hold fee.
- b) **Correct CityFHEPS rule to reflect the Council intent of Int. 146**
 - i) **Remove Rent Utility Deductions from calculating the maximum allowable rent.**
HSU support’s Int. 229, which seeks to remove rent utility costs from the maximum permissible rent for apartments. This change to the CityFHEPS rule chips away at buying power of CityFHEPS vouchers which were very intentionally set by the Council at the Fair Market Rent for New York City. As rents for many apartments do not include the cost of all utilities, this deduction reduces the number of viable apartments available for voucher holders.
 - ii) **Remove Rent Reasonableness tests from CityFHEPS applications.**
This test to determine if a proposed rent is reasonable to similar units in the community has already harmed households in shelter who lost viable apartments set below the Fair Market Rent. Just as concerning is that this process is completely opaque to a voucher holder and shelter staff who would be unable to verify whether an apartment is reasonable unless they purchase an account with a third-party website. Voucher holders would be left stumbling in the dark looking for housing, submitting applications only to be told to either negotiate with the landlord to lower the rent or keep looking. While the City has paused it temporarily to try to improve the calculations, we urge the Council to consider legislating its removal from the CityFHEPS rule altogether. DSS’ concern that a few unscrupulous landlords may try to ask for higher rents than deemed acceptable should not mean forcing all voucher holders to go through a completely opaque process which has already stopped households from moving into permanent housing.
- c) **Expand rental assistance eligibility to help more households**
 - i) **Remove the 90-day DHS shelter stay eligibility requirement for CityFHEPS.**
We urge the Mayor and Chief Housing Officer Katz to make good on their promise to remove this outdated policy from the CityFHEPS rule. The rationale of forcing people experiencing homeless to languish in shelter for 90 days to prove they needed housing is cruel and debunked rationale of the Bloomberg administration that believed that housing is a draw to shelter. DHS intake centers verify that people are indeed homeless and in need of shelter, which would weed out any supposed people that don’t actually need the housing assistance.
 - ii) **Expand CityFHEPS to households regardless of legal status.**

Households lacking legal status are some of the longest-term stayers in DHS shelters because they are categorically ineligible for most types of assistance. As thousands of new migrant households come to New York City and enter shelter, thousands more households will be unable to exit shelter to permanent housing because of their inability to afford the cost of rent. Removing legal status as a requirement for CityFHEPS would help families and individuals without status to achieve the American dream, while creating a cost-savings for shelter services.

- iii) **Lift the maximum income limits for initial eligibility** from 200% of the Federal Poverty Limit (FPL) **to 50% Area Median Income (AMI)** to allow the “working poor” to be able to afford rent.

Too many hard-working New Yorkers are stuck in shelter because their paycheck isn’t enough to afford rent but too much to qualify for a voucher. They must dance on a razor’s edge, working at least 30 hours a week minimum, but not exceed 200% FPL which would cause them to lose their shopping letter. By increasing the initial income eligibility limits to 50% AMI, it would widen this initial income band to help more households to exit shelters and attain permanent housing.

- iv) **Remove the work requirement for households in shelter.**

NYC’s unemployment rate is double the national average, and a work first approach ensures households remain in shelter longer, compounding the trauma of homelessness and driving up shelter costs. Currently shelter residents must work a minimum of 30 hours a week to qualify for CityFHEPS but if a single adult works as little as 4 additional hours at minimum wage, their income would be over the 200% FPL limit. No one should be forced to walk this tightrope just to have a means to exit shelter. As a practical matter, the eligibility is so narrow that few single adults and small households are able to qualify.

- v) **Remove the shelter history requirement for households trying to access CityFHEPS in the community.**

Housing vouchers should be provided to everyone at the risk of homelessness, not just those that already experienced the trauma of homelessness at least once before. Removing this requirement to access housing vouchers in the community would align with the Mayor’s goal of upstream prevention services to stabilize households sooner, rather than waiting for them to destabilize before offering assistance.

Additional Needs for Migrant households in shelter

HSU’s member agencies and their dedicated staff are valiantly trying to assist migrant households to the best of their ability, but additional resources which are needed. In addition to the need for care products, shelters are noticing they need enhanced budget lines for laundry services for households being housed in hotel rooms, as well as food services to allow them to offer culturally appropriate meals which clients would find appetizing.

DHS providers are encountering language barriers trying to assist their clients. While utilizing the City’s language line as needed, if the City authorized hiring providers to utilize hiring differentials to attract bilingual staff, they would be able to better connect and engage clients. Spanish is the predominant



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need, and to a lesser extent French and Creole speakers for households coming from West African countries. Mirroring the need for translation services within shelter, the Department of Education will also need to quickly accommodate language requests for thousands of newly arrived students.

In addition to these more tangible resources, there is also an immense need for access to legal counsel for immigration cases. Members have told of piecemeal solutions where their staff attorney refocused their caseload to only process immigration and asylum cases, but a more concerted response by the City is needed. This response could include additional funding to hire more immigration attorneys or explore other models to meet the need, such as tapping the City Bar to coordinate and supervise volunteer attorneys working on immigration cases.

While individual circumstances of the moment make homelessness and the rising shelter census appear like an intractable problem, with key investments in prevention, shelter programs, and access rental assistance, New York City can continue to make strides and serve as a shining example of a sanctuary city. Thank you for Chair Hanif and the Immigration Committee for your unyielding commitment to serving and protecting the rights of every New Yorker, whether they have been here for one day or a lifetime. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at elee@hsunited.org

City Hall: Committee on Immigration
Hearing: Oversight - Resources and Services for Newly Arrived Asylum Seekers
Immigrant ARC Testimony

My name is Camille Mackler and I am the Executive Director of Immigrant ARC ("I-ARC").

Immigrant ARC is a policy and training institute with over 80 member organizations that provide legal services across New York State. It began as a collaborative of lawyers who provided immigration representation out of JFK Airport, following the 1st Muslim Travel Ban. In 2020, I-ARC spun out into a stand-alone non-profit. Our mission is to increase access to counsel for immigrant New Yorkers by mobilizing New York State's legal service providers and addressing the systemic barriers to justice that immigrants face. As an organization dedicated to ensuring that the rights of immigrants are protected, and whose members are immigrant legal service providers, we advocate not only for access to legal representation for immigrant communities, but also for the government to generate policies that allow legal service providers to sustain representation for immigrants throughout the length of their cases.

Immigration and migration to New York City are not new phenomena, but in recent weeks the influx of migrants to New York City both through routine migration, and the decision of the Governors of Texas and Arizona to bus migrants to this city, has exacerbated the strain that already existed on New York City's shelter system and social services supports, and created a need to immediately expand the capacity of New York City's dedicated immigration bar to provide immigration legal services.

Additionally, because Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has started using non-profit addresses on individual immigration paperwork, New York City immigration legal service

providers, along with other advocacy and community-based organizations, are receiving immigration documentation for individuals they do not represent and have never encountered. This places those immigrants in danger of missing information concerning their ICE check-ins or Notices to Appear before the immigration court, which could result in them being placed in deportation proceedings or ordered removed *in absentia*.

At the same time, there are also immigrants who are arriving in New York with immigration documentation that list the addresses of legal service providers and advocacy and community-based organizations who are going to those offices expecting assistance with clothing, shelter, job-placement, legal assistance and other services. Those immigrants are often at organizations who do not provide such assistance and who had no prior notice that these individuals would be arriving. Because the lines to get into 26 Federal Plaza where both USCIS and New York City's largest immigration court are housed, are so long, immigrants are being told to line up as early as 3am in the morning in order to get in for their ICE check-ins. Despite the challenge of these circumstances, New Yorkers have demonstrated once again that this is a city that welcomes immigrants.

Immigrant ARC and our members are proud to be New Yorkers who have risen to the moment by showing welcome, compassion, and dignity to individuals who have come here asking for help. Our city's response has been the right one - but, where legal services are concerned at least - it is being implemented in the wrong way.

This is not the first time our City has had to respond to a sudden surge in needs for legal services for migrants. In fact, most of the nation-leading investments in immigration legal services the City currently makes were initially precipitated by urgent needs to respond to specific situations.

The result is siloed service delivery streams that are inflexible and unable to pivot to meet the demands of the moment.

At the same time, providers are at capacity, and trying to meet the ongoing needs of current clients - many of which were victims of the Trump-era enforcement policies and who's cases are still pending because of COVID delays - while scrambling to assist with this new issue and also support staff that have unprecedented levels of burnout.

When it became clear that an influx of asylum seekers were arriving in New York City, legal service providers were expected to address the needs of these newcomers initially with no funding, and with no plan on how to manage or hand off existing caseloads which they are ethically required to continue working on. The procurement for legal services support was delayed and not issued until September 15th for an October 1st start date. That timeline is unrealistic, and has led to gaps in coverage. Legal service providers cannot continue diverting their staff from other cases to address this need, and need not only resources, but a reasonable ramp up period to provide legal services to the affected population on an ongoing basis.

It is time for us to devise long-term, sustainable solutions to legal services needs. Immigration cases take years to resolve, and providers must have confidence that investments are for the long-term in order to hire staff and take on cases. Beyond this simple reality, however, we must create funding streams that can meet the needs we face today, and pivot to the ones we will encounter tomorrow.

Investments in legal services for immigrants are the right thing to do - New York City's own programs have demonstrated the stunning difference in outcomes when someone has

representation. In a 2017 report evaluating the impact of the New York Immigrant Family Unit Project (NYIFUP), the Vera Institute for Justice projected that 48% of clients represented through the programs were likely to have successful outcomes in their deportation cases.

Between July 1 of 2011 and November 1, 2013, the period immediately preceding the roll out of NYIFUP, only 4% of immigrants in deportation proceedings at the Varick Street Immigration Court had successful outcomes. This represents a 1,100-percent increase from the observed success rate for unrepresented cases at Varick Street before NYIFUP. Additionally, it is unrealistic to expect anyone - much less someone new to the country and, possibly, the language, to navigate the system on their own and have a fair chance at making their case before a trained judge and against a trained government lawyer.

We must take the time to determine what these solutions can be, incorporating the feedback of providers who, for far too long, have been on the frontlines of each successive crisis and have all too much experience on how to provide immigration legal services to a maximum number of people in crisis. While there has been stakeholder engagement, it is clear that feedback was not meaningfully incorporated in the design of current and proposed programming. Instead, there is a trend towards limiting the services to the most basic levels in exchange for increased volume of people served.

A long-term, replicable model includes investments for short-term, rapid response services to screen as many people as possible and identify urgent and trending issues, coupled with additional funding for long-term representation of those found eligible for immigration relief.

I-ARC members are meeting frequently to keep one another posted on the needs, to understand what responses are necessary, and to coordinate efforts. We are asking **New York City to make**

\$10 million available immediately in legal rapid response funding to be spent in the short term for immediate legal needs. For long term, sustainable solutions New York City must continue funding its existing programs, creating new funding streams that are more flexible and can respond to needs in the moment. Finally, New York City should urge the State Legislature to pass the Access to Representation Act, which would create a right to

counsel for all facing deportation in New York's immigration courts.

Thank you for your work on behalf of immigrant communities, for calling this hearing, and for the opportunity to testify today.



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Testimony of Immigrant Justice Corps on Resources and Services for Newly Arrived Asylum Seekers

September 30, 2022

Immigrant Justice Corps appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony regarding resources and services for newly arrived asylum seekers. We are very grateful to the New York City Council for its unwavering support for New York City immigrants and for providing funding for high quality legal counsel and other critical services. As the City responds to a humanitarian crisis spurred by the political stunts of state governors who have sent vulnerable, traumatized families and individuals to our city to avoid serving them, we are proud to partner with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) and inspired by the spirit of welcome and care that the City is demonstrating. We are grateful for the chance to share our thoughts on how the City can best serve this population in light of our own experiences at the NYC Asylum Seeker Navigation Center as well as our years of experience providing immigration legal services.

Organizational Information

The first and only fellowship of its kind, Immigrant Justice Corps (IJC) identifies promising lawyers and advocates passionate about immigration, places them with legal services and community-based organizations where they can make the greatest difference and supports them with training and expert insights as they directly assist immigrants in need. Now in our ninth year, IJC has trained and placed over 300 Justice Fellows (law graduates) and Community Fellows (college graduates) in support of our mission to increase both the quantity and quality of immigration legal services. All our fellows are lawyers, law school graduates, Department of Justice accredited representatives, or in the process of becoming accredited representatives.

Since IJC's founding in 2014, our fellows have provided legal services to over 90,000 immigrants and their families and have been able to help immigrants to secure lawful status or avoid deportation in 93% of these cases. Because we place



fellows at multiple host organizations -- many of which are in New York City -- as well as provide immigration representation through our own in-house legal practice, we have a unique vantage point to observe and to suggest creative approaches to serving long term and recently arrived immigrant New Yorkers.

IJC's involvement with MOIA's response to recently arrived asylum seekers and key observations.

As of late August 2022, IJC has been integrally involved in providing limited immigration legal services to asylum seekers who have arrived in NYC since January 1, 2022. As partners with the City under the ActionNYC in the Libraries contract, IJC was called upon by the Mayor's Office for Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) to redeploy our resources to serve this population of people for a period and did so proudly, with admiration for the City's approach and a desire to meet the immediate legal needs of these vulnerable families. IJC, in close collaboration with Catholic Charities Community Services (CCCS), has been staffing the recently opened Asylum Seeker Navigation Center (ASNC) since its soft opening on August 25, 2022. Over this time, we have developed a flow of services, created informational materials, and provided triage-style immigration legal services to dozens of families. Since IJ has responded to various crises since its inception, we were well-positioned to recognize the importance of swift action and apply our learning from past rapid response engagements.

Through this redeployment engagement, we have made key observations about this population and their immediate and longer-term needs. First of all, we have observed that the attendees at the ASNC have many immediate needs including case management and social services but are often most concerned about their immigration situation. The ability to access various services in one location is tremendous and makes for a very exhausting day for attendees and especially young children.

Most of the people we have seen at the ASNC have been served with a Notice to Appear (NTA) which initiates removal proceedings when Immigration and Customs

Enforcement (ICE) files the document with the Immigration Court. Most people's NTAs have not yet been filed with the Immigration Court, leaving them in legal limbo. They have been made to report to ICE Enforcement & Removal Operations (ERO) because an NTA was issued, but they often do not yet have a court date scheduled. Because both ICE ERO and the Immigration Court are U.S. government agencies, one initial challenge is ensuring that people understand the difference between an appointment with ICE ERO, which serves as an alternative to immigration detention, and a court date with an Immigration Judge which is part of removal proceedings against them.

We have helped attendees to send an email to ICE ERO informing the agency of their move to New York City and requesting that their check-in obligations be transferred to this new jurisdiction. A failure to check in with ICE ERO can trigger a cascade of consequences including being added to an "absconder list" and possible detention. Therefore, proactive communication with ICE ERO is essential to prevent family separation and unnecessary detention of people who are trying to comply with their check-in obligations.

Likewise, we have helped attendees to file a Change of Address document with the Immigration Court through an online address change feature as well as paper forms. For many attendees, the address entered on the NTA as their mailing address has no relation to reality. Many NTAs list NYC shelter locations, legal service providers' offices, and other public offices. When notices from the court are sent to these addresses, people will not receive them and if they do not otherwise know about their court date by checking the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) information line frequently, they may not attend and therefore be subject to an *in absentia* removal order. To help to avoid such a scenario, we explain thoroughly the importance of maintaining a current address with the Immigration Court. We also give detailed instructions and assistance in checking the EOIR hotline or online portal so that people can stay apprised of any developments in the scheduling of their case even if a formal notice from the court is not sent or does not arrive to their current address.

For cases where the NTA has already been filed with the Immigration Court, and a court date has been scheduled, it is imperative to file a motion to change venue immediately to request that the case be moved to the jurisdiction where the person is now living. If the motion to change venue is not received or is not granted by the Immigration Judge in the court where the NTA was filed, the case will go forward in the location where it was filed and an *in absentia* deportation order will likely issue. If the NTA has not yet been filed, we have been advising people of the process to change venue so that they can file independently as soon as a court date is scheduled.

Though we provide this information in both group settings and individualized consultations, we have noticed that people are less able to absorb and apply the information in a group setting. We find it necessary to repeat the information in an individualized manner for people to understand what is needed and why. Similarly, essential information that any potential asylum seeker needs is the date by which they must file an asylum application in order to avoid violating the one- year filing deadline set by statute. We have found that providing an individualized date certain calculated based on an individual's date of entry, is better understood than a generalized communication that one must apply for asylum within a year of entering the U.S. This is crucial because if one files after a year of presence in the U.S., they will need to prove extraordinary or changed circumstances in order to qualify for asylum rather than a lesser form of relief – withholding of removal – which requires a higher showing of probability of persecution and provides far fewer benefits to the individual.

Furthermore, we have noted that the ability to screen individual members of a family separately and confidentially is extremely important. Though families may have traveled together and may need to access social services as a unit, they must be treated as individuals in order to provide a full assessment of their potential eligibility for relief under the immigration law. For example, a family member's unique situation as an abused, abandoned or neglected child, may make them eligible for relief that other family members do not have available. There may also be dynamics present within the family, such as domestic violence, which necessitate

individual guidance and may make the abused partner eligible for certain types of victim-based relief. Individual screenings are necessary to ethical immigration legal services.

Finally, we recognize that ultimately, the individuals and families seeking services now will need full representation in their Immigration Court cases. They will be prosecuted by a trained government attorney and will need high quality representation to force compliance with the process due under the immigration laws and to assist in presenting a complete and compelling case for relief. This is beyond the scope of services at the ASNC currently, but it is a looming necessity for all attendees. We have been screening for eligibility for asylum and any other form of relief under the immigration law and advising attendees accordingly. We recognize, however, that representation will be a crucial future need. This need cannot be met solely by the existing NYC immigration legal services community because providers are already overwhelmed with EOIR backlogs, wildly inconsistent USCIS processing times, and representation needs of earlier arrived asylum seekers with cases in immigration court.

Suggestions as to scope of service based on IJC's direct observation at the ASNC and years of experience serving immigrant New Yorkers.

The City certainly faces an incredibly difficult situation due to the volume of asylum seekers that are currently here and continue to arrive. Ideally everyone could be provided services immediately, but the reality for immigration legal services is that some things are immediately urgent, and others may take a very long time. In the immediate, the following things should be prioritized:

- **Screenings for individuals.** People need accurate, reliable information about the removal process and the options for relief in immigration court in their particular case. This will enable informed decision making and decrease the chance that people will be preyed on by unscrupulous immigration service providers like *notarios*. These screenings must be individual rather than by family so that each family member gets advice and

counsel based on their unique eligibility for immigration relief. This also allows for recognition of family dynamics that may put individuals in immediate danger and/or qualify them for specific types of immigration relief. Every asylum seeker should be informed about the specific date by which they should file an asylum application in order to comply with the statutory one-year filing deadline.

- **Know Your Rights sessions.** These sessions must explain how the immigration system works. They should differentiate ICE check in appointments from immigration court hearing dates. They must provide information about the importance of maintaining a current address with ICE and the immigration court in order to receive key notices and avoid negative consequences.
- **Triage style services focused on change of address.** Ensuring that ICE and the immigration court have the correct, current address and that the removal case is venued at the immigration court where individuals live is essential. *Pro se* assistance should be provided to do the necessary address changes and people should receive information about the process such that they can do it independently for future address changes which are likely given the transitional nature of housing for this population.
- **Centralized management of these services and tracking of individuals.** Lack of centralized coordination of these services will lead to inconsistency which will diminish efficacy of and confidence in the legal services provided. Standardized processes with respect to training, materials and service provision will enable higher quality services and create important efficiencies when serving a population of this size. Furthermore, recipients of triage style service should be tracked to streamline their access to full representation.

Ultimately, these individuals and families need full representation in immigration court. They will face a trained government attorney and will bear the burden for

establishing eligibility and arguing for a positive exercise of discretion in many instances. Quality representation changes everything. Though it cannot change the deficiencies of the overall immigration system, it is the best way available to us now to provide these asylum seekers a fair chance at getting the process they are due and accessing the protection they need.

The urgent need for multi-year funding for triage and full representation.

Both a triage response and full representation require funding. IJC and CCCS redeployed ActionNYC resources and provided additional institutional resources to stand up a legal services response on a short time frame. It is not sustainable. For continuation of services and expansion to what will be needed going forward, funding and a realistic program design are crucial. NYC's immigration legal services community has a wealth of knowledge and expertise. By engaging this community as a partner in shaping a sustainable response, all of the necessary considerations and a realistic timeframe can be assured.

The immigration legal services community in NYC is largely already at capacity serving immigrant New Yorkers who are seeking immigration benefits or defending against removal. Reinforcements are needed and this requires funding to hire new practitioners, paralegals and social workers who are dedicated to this population and response. Due to unpredictable processing times within immigration court and uncertainty as to continued arrivals of asylum seekers, appropriate multi-year funding is urgently needed. Moreover, this funding must provide not only for representatives on the ground but also for detailed program design as well as monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the system employed will meet the needs of those served.

We commend the City Council for its continued leadership in funding essential immigration legal services. NYC is a leader and example for other cities who are responding to the arrivals of bussed asylum seekers. We urge the City Council to expand immigration legal services funding to meet the current and forthcoming needs of people who have been bussed from the border to our city, as well as to



continue to provide immigrant New Yorkers with the support they deserve through the well-developed channels throughout the city. Thank you for your attention today and we welcome any questions from committee members.

Testimony for the Committee on Immigration Hearing

Sept. 30, 2022

The Rev. Dr. Chloe Breyer, Executive Director,
The Interfaith Center of New York

Greetings. I am grateful to CM Hanif and others who have helped make these hearings happen along with the mutual aid collective, faith groups, and others who have been working hard to address the preventable crisis imposed by Governor Abbott of Texas and other southern governors to send asylum seekers to New York City without any kind of coordination since the summer.

The Interfaith Center of New York is a non-profit organization that for a quarter of a century has worked with grassroots and immigrant faith leaders to address NYC's most pressing social concerns. As such, for decades the challenges faced by immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers in New York have been part of our work. During the Trump Administration we partnered with the New Sanctuary Coalition to bring diverse faith leaders accompaniment opportunities. We worked with houses of worship who sought to provide sanctuary to immigrants facing deportation and lobbied successfully for state legislation requiring foster care agencies with federal contracts to be transparent about the number of unaccompanied children in their care including those whose parents had been separated from them at the Southern border.

When busloads of migrant families started arriving at Port Authority this summer, we worked with the mutual aid collective and the Office of Faith Based and Community Partnerships as well as a handful of houses of worship who were acting as respite centers to identify opportunities for volunteers and to share information about where to send donations—sending this information where appropriate through our newsletter and social media.

The dedication, energy, and individualized care that the mutual aid collective has shown to new migrants arriving in NYC, is truly extraordinary. More than any other group I have encountered in government, the church, or the nonprofit world, members of mutual aid collective are committed to helping every person they encounter in need—whether it be a mother seeking shoes and diapers for her kid, a family getting off the bus who have not eaten for four days, or a young person who has been assaulted in a shelter and wants to move. They have spent thousands of dollars getting new arrivals back to family or friends who are waiting for them in other parts of the country. This administration and others in government trying to address the challenges of the present would do well to listen to them and take into account their experience when making policy decisions in this area.

Thank you.



Testimony of

Coalition for the Homeless

and

The Legal Aid Society

on

Oversight: Resources and Services for Newly Arrived Asylum Seekers

submitted to

The New York City Council Committee on Immigration

Jacquelyn Simone
Policy Director
Coalition for the Homeless

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

September 30, 2022

The Coalition for the Homeless and The Legal Aid Society (LAS) welcome this opportunity to testify before the New York City Council's Committee on Immigration regarding resources and services for newly arrived asylum seekers.

Concerns About Congregate Settings in HERRCs

As asylum seekers continue to arrive in New York City, it is imperative that any facilities created to shelter them are safe and appropriate. When City officials first notified us of their plan to open "Humanitarian Emergency Response and Relief Centers" (HERRCs), we asked them a series of questions about how these sites will operate. We are still waiting for answers to basic questions about the process and rights of people referred to these locations.

At that time, we also expressed our grave concerns about the possibility that the City would place minor children in congregate settings. The arriving migrants are highly vulnerable because they have experienced great hardship and trauma, and most arrive without having had access to proper medical care and nutrition. Forcing these vulnerable families into congregate shelters denies them safety, opportunity, and humanity. It would subject them to the same dangers endured by homeless families decades ago, when they were forced to sleep in offices, barracks-style shelters, and even the Bronx House of Detention.

We have fought for decades against the harm that arises when families with minor children are required to sleep overnight in settings where they do not have access to their own private space. There is extensive evidence in the record of the homeless families' right to shelter litigation of this harm, and that evidence was the basis for Local Laws passed by this Council to prohibit such placements. State rules and court orders also barred congregate family shelters, and the City paid \$18 million in contempt fines for violating them. We saw again after Superstorm Sandy that children were harmed by the time, however brief, they spent in disaster shelters.

Placing homeless families with children into congregate settings would be misguided and cruel. This practice would take us back decades to a tragic time when children and their families were subjected to dangerous and inhumane conditions. The documented harms of placing families with children into congregate shelters include:

- Spread of contagious diseases and aggravation of already serious medical conditions, including asthma;
- Sexual attacks on children;
- Children being exposed to inappropriate sexual behavior and violent or threatening behavior in congregate bathrooms and sleeping rooms;
- Physical exhaustion due to inability to sleep and the overwhelming fear of being sheltered with strangers;
- Missed school due to exhaustion, illness, and inability to do homework in congregate settings;
- Missed work and public assistance appointments, leading to loss of employment and benefits;
- Inability to meet special dietary needs without cooking facilities;

- Deterioration of family life and parental authority; and
- Dramatically increased rates of depression and mental health crises, including suicide attempts and suicides.

In response to our concerns, the City has said that it does not currently plan to place children in congregate settings, but has not categorically said it will not do so in the future.

We also have concerns about access for people with disabilities at the HERRCs. At the height of the pandemic, we litigated in the *Fisher* and *Butler* cases to ensure that single adults with disabilities have equal access to the programs of the NYC Department of Homeless Services (DHS). Around the time of Superstorm Sandy, the City settled a case called *BCID v. Bloomberg* and agreed to accommodate disabilities in disaster shelters, which are temporary congregate sites set up during emergencies. From the limited information we have about HERRCs, it sounds like they will be very similar to disaster shelters, so the protections the City agreed to in the *BCID* case should apply to HERRCs as well.

The Right to Shelter

The City has assured us that services at the tent HERRC sites will be voluntary and people can come and go as they see fit, and that any asylum seekers who come to a DHS intake office will be served there in the same way as any other homeless person. These two representations seem to mean that the City does not intend to limit the right to shelter for anyone who is able to reach a DHS intake office. We remain concerned about how recent arrivals who have been brought to HERRC sites in remote parts of the City will know how to access shelter if they need it and how they will get to DHS sites.

The City has told us that they do not believe that a HERRC is a shelter and it will not be operated by DHS, so it is not subject to the regulations that apply to shelters or to the consent decrees in our litigation that established the right to shelter. However, these rules and standards are not mere technical requirements – they are derived from common sense. For example, the *Callahan* Consent Decree requires that shelter residents be provided with lockable storage. No one who is given a bed in a congregate setting will be able to sleep if they do not have a safe, secure place to store their belongings at night. The HERRC program will not be successful if people do not feel that the sites meet the basic minimum standards of the City’s municipal shelter system.

Many other operational questions about the new sites remain unanswered. We do not know who will be sent to the HERRCs or how they will get there. We do not know what services will be offered to single adult men and women and adult families, or even where they will sleep. We do not know how many bathrooms they will have or how the sites will accommodate people’s disabilities. We do not know what information people there will be given about their right or ability to apply for shelter if they need a place to go after their brief stay at the HERRC ends or if they choose not to stay in the HERRC. The City has committed to having written procedures in place to govern operations at the HERRCs but has not yet shared any such documents with us so that we can evaluate how they will serve our clients.

Moving Shelter Residents to Permanent Housing and Ensuring Sufficient Shelter Capacity

In response to the increasing numbers of arrivals from the southern border in DHS shelters, the City has focused on expanding shelter capacity to meet its legal obligations. But the City could place new arrivals in the existing shelter system in rooms that become available when current shelter residents move to permanent housing. This would be a win for everybody: Shelter residents who move out with housing subsidies are much less likely to return to the shelter system than people who exit the system without a subsidy, so investing in improving these programs would help New Yorkers and reduce the City's costs. At the same time, the City would free up space to serve new arrivals without having to open as many new shelters.

The City could take the following steps to increase capacity, including by moving people out:

1. *Improve housing subsidy programs.* The City currently offers multiple programs that enable shelter residents to exit shelters and move to permanent housing, including CityFHEPS, EHV, SOTA, Section 8, and public housing. The City could improve these programs so that they would be more effective, reducing the length of stay in shelters.

a. *Reform bureaucratic processes that slow down shelter exits.* City and shelter staff must process subsidy applications more quickly and ensure that minor errors no longer result in months-long delays or outright denials. Such delays make it impossible for applicants with City-funded housing subsidies to compete effectively in the rental market. Reforms should include:

- i. Completing approvals and payments for leases within 30 days;
- ii. Eliminating delays in issuing checks;
- iii. Quickly completing reviews of appropriate clearance databases;
- iv. Quickly completing reviews of tenant packets; and
- v. Quickly making checks available for pick up.

b. *Eliminate unnecessary rules.* The City must eliminate unnecessary rules, such as the 90-day wait prior to being eligible for CityFHEPS, the utility allowance deduction, and rent reasonableness rules.

c. *Combat discrimination.* The City must rebuild its source of income discrimination unit and enforce the rights of voucher holders.

d. *Expand eligibility.* The City must expand eligibility for City-funded housing subsidies to more households, especially those without an eligible immigration status or mixed-status families, focusing in the first instance on long-stayers in shelters.

e. *Improve code enforcement.* The City must improve code enforcement by ensuring that oversight agencies regularly conduct thorough inspections, and that they have the capacity and expertise needed to enforce the completion of necessary repairs.

2. *Build shelter capacity by not delaying or canceling planned shelter openings.* DHS staff work hard to develop sites for new shelters, which are necessary to ensure that shelter residents can be placed in their communities of origin where they will be able to access resources that can help them leave shelters sooner, and in order to replace older sites that cannot be made accessible to people with disabilities. Neighborhood leaders and elected officials should welcome these facilities and not seek to block them, and the City must stand firm against any opposition to ensure that sufficient capacity is built.
3. *Maximize use of current capacity by using all current, accessible parts of the system.* The City needs to use the capacity it already has in other parts of the DHS shelter system rather than limiting placements to certain beds on the basis of where people are in DHS' internal assessment process. The City should also continue to use all the accessible capacity it has access to, rather than moving out of hotels and other placements voluntarily.
4. *Accommodate disabilities.* The City must ensure that disabilities are accommodated in placements and moves, as negotiated last summer in the *Butler* litigation.
5. *Adjust the supportive housing move-out process to eliminate delays.* Many shelter residents who qualify for supportive housing are waiting for months or longer to get access to permanent housing for which they qualify.
6. *Make eviction prevention services at HomeBase more available in the community.* The City is failing to make full use of its own homelessness prevention efforts because appointments are so scarce for people in the community.

Helping Recent Arrivals Establish Basic Economic Security

The migrants we are meeting every day want to work, but not all of them have work authorization in the form of an Employment Authorization Document (EAD), which Federal law restricts to certain non-citizens depending on where they are in the immigration process. At the same time, Federal restrictions also bar many new arrivals from eligibility for government benefits that would provide a means of support while they are waiting for employment authorization. The City can take the following steps to ensure their economic security while they wait for work authorization:

1. The City should ensure new arrivals have access to benefits that they are entitled to.

Charity should be reserved for the people who are not eligible for government help.

a. *Offer benefits screening to new arrivals.* The City should offer recent arrivals benefits eligibility screening and assistance applying for benefits. Eligibility for Cash Assistance, SNAP, and Medicaid benefits is dependent on the new arrivals' immigration status. While not all new arrivals are eligible for benefits under current Federal and State law, many of them are, and need to be advised of their eligibility in order to take the next step of applying and obtaining benefits. For instance:

- Federal benefits eligibility: Persons who are paroled for more than a year, and who have been granted asylum, are eligible for Federal benefits, including federally funded Cash Assistance, SNAP, and Medicaid.

- State-funded Cash Assistance and health insurance: Many more non-citizens are eligible for State-funded Cash Assistance and health insurance, including persons who have been paroled for less than a year, persons granted Temporary Protected Status, persons who have been granted deferred action, and persons who have applied for asylum and who have an Employment Authorization Document.
- State-funded Medicaid: Many more people who have commenced the process of obtaining an immigration benefit are eligible for State-funded Medicaid.

b. *Offer new arrivals benefits enrollment assistance.* Beyond screening for eligibility, new arrivals should be offered assistance enrolling for benefits. Assistance enrolling is necessary so that the recent arrivals do not face the barriers that other non-citizen clients have often faced when going into a Benefits Access Center alone, such as flat-out diversion, being asked if they have a Social Security Number, or being asked whether they are already a lawful permanent resident.

c. *Implement additional measures to ensure better access to benefits for new arrivals.*

- *Re-train client-facing Human Resources Administration (HRA) staff on basic immigrant eligibility rules and policies.* HRA has policies in place that prohibit front-line workers from giving advisory opinions about eligibility to new arrivals who are seeking to apply for benefits. Staff must be trained on these policies, and the policies must be enforced to ensure that new arrivals who appear at Benefits Access Centers do not get diverted from filing applications.
- *Implement fixes to address HRA delays in timely processing applications, including increasing HRA staffing.* The City is facing a staffing shortage at HRA, which, along with policies that should be reformed, compounds the agency's difficulties in timely processing applications and keeping client cases open. These problems affect clients regardless of immigration status, and these problems must be addressed to ensure that all clients are able to get the assistance they need from the agency in a timely way.
- *Give people help with verification needed to prove eligibility for benefits.* Rules require applicants for HRA benefits to have certain documents that will be hard for many new arrivals to produce. The City has a legal duty to assist with verification, including accepting self-attestation and, where necessary, assisting with securing needed documentation.
- *Ensure recent arrivals are provided the opportunity to be counseled on common concerns presented by non-citizens that could otherwise serve as barriers to applying for the help they need.* The two primary concerns likely to come from this population are public charge (President Biden just issued a new rule, but people still fear the old rule) and the confidentiality of client information. Counsel on these rules must be provided in connection with screening and enrollment assistance for benefits.

2. The City must make services available to recent arrivals in a number of different ways.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to serving the new arrivals. The City must make services available in various ways to ensure all who are eligible for assistance receive it. We offer some suggestions:

- *Issue comprehensive materials on eligibility and enrollment.* HRA should continue to train shelter providers on benefits eligibility, but they should ensure that their materials are comprehensive and that providers know how to connect residents with benefits eligibility review and assistance.
- *Set-up out-stationed workers.* The City should set up stand-alone sources of assistance on benefits screening. While shelters build their capacity to help clients with benefits, HRA can also locate “out-stationed workers” in or near shelters where people can go to determine benefits eligibility and get assistance filing their applications, rather than sending people to already overwhelmed Benefits Access Center staff.
- *Adequately staff “Welcome Centers.”* Ensure Welcome Centers offer all of these services, including out-stationed HRA workers who screen for benefits eligibility and assist with applications, and that there are also NYS Department of Health staff who can help with State-funded health insurance enrollment.

3. The City should provide DSS the staff it needs to support the recent arrivals and all New Yorkers. The agency is short-staffed. It is critical to ensure that DSS has the staff it needs, even on an emergency or temporary basis.

4. The City should advocate for sensible State and Federal reforms. The City should advocate for State and Federal emergency actions and policies that would alleviate some of the pressure the City is experiencing with respect to serving recent arrivals.

State reforms: The City should ask the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) and the Department of Health (DOH) to make more non-citizens eligible for Cash Assistance and Medicaid. Currently, DOH considers many more non-citizens to be “Permanently Residing Under Color of Law” (PRUCOL) and eligible for Medicaid than those categories of non-citizens that OTDA considers PRUCOL and eligible for Cash Assistance. For example, asylum applicants are eligible for Medicaid but not Cash Assistance (unless they have an Employment Authorization Document). U-Visa and Special Immigrant Juvenile Status applicants are eligible for Medicaid, but not Cash Assistance. OTDA has the discretion to expand eligibility.

Federal reforms: The City should also seek the following changes to existing policies and procedures from the Federal government:

- a. *Issuing a rule that would give asylum applicants the opportunity to achieve economic security by making them immediately eligible for employment authorization, without having to wait.* The Department of Homeland Security

should make asylees eligible for an EAD immediately, by amending 8 C.F.R. §§ 208.7 and 274a.12(c)(8) to remove the 150-day and 180-day waiting periods.

- i. EAD is needed to work.* An EAD enables asylum applicants to work to support themselves while they are waiting for a determination on their claim for asylum and to start building a secure future in the U.S.
- ii. EAD is needed to access State assistance in New York.* In New York, an EAD makes an asylum applicant eligible for Cash Assistance, which can help families stabilize. Families will also become eligible for certain housing subsidies that are proven to prevent and end homelessness.
- iii. EAD should not be subject to the asylum clock.* The asylum “clock” must be eliminated. Enabling asylum applicants to obtain EADs immediately would mean doing away with the asylum EAD clock. Under current rules, asylum applicants must wait 150 days before they can file for an EAD, and they cannot be issued an EAD until a minimum of 180 days have passed. Some applicants are required to wait even longer because a continuance of the applicant’s immigration court case, even to obtain counsel or for other necessary reasons, stops the clock, sometimes adding months to the time they must wait to obtain an EAD.
- c. The Department of Homeland Security should direct Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to refrain from seeking removal of the new arrivals.* Currently, ICE is routinely seeking removal for the new arrivals. Many have claims to asylum and/or other immigration benefits, and seeking removal is unnecessary and expensive for all. The Department of Homeland Security could allow these new arrivals to seek asylum affirmatively before the USCIS Asylum Office, rather than defensively before the Immigration Court.
- d. The Federal government must make a multi-year investment in funding for legal counsel.* As long as new arrivals are coming to New York and are subject to removal proceedings, which take years to resolve in the courts, legal organizations need increased funding to meet the demand for services. The demand will continue for the next few years, as thousands of the new arrivals, all or most of whom will need counsel, will be in removal proceedings. This investment would acknowledge that meeting the need for increased legal services capacity requires the hiring and training of new attorneys and advocates, which takes time.
- e. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and/or ICE must discontinue the use of false addresses on noncitizens’ immigration paperwork.* Immigration officials at the southern border, whether CBP, ICE, or both, must immediately discontinue the practice of listing false addresses on noncitizens’ immigration paperwork. False addresses will lead to noncitizens failing to receive notice of

their hearings, with resultant removal orders entered against them in their absence.

Conclusion

We thank the Immigration Committee for the opportunity to testify on this important topic, and for the Council's dedication to ensuring that newly arrived asylum seekers have access to appropriate resources and services.

About The Legal Aid Society and Coalition for the Homeless

The Legal Aid Society: The Legal Aid Society (LAS), the nation's oldest and largest not-for-profit legal services organization, is more than a law firm for clients who cannot afford to pay for counsel. It is an indispensable component of the legal, social, and economic fabric of New York City – passionately advocating for low-income individuals and families across a variety of civil, criminal, and juvenile rights matters, while also fighting for legal reform. This dedication to justice for all New Yorkers continues during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Legal Aid Society has performed this role in City, State, and federal courts since 1876. It does so by capitalizing on the diverse expertise, experience, and capabilities of more than 2,000 attorneys, social workers, paralegals, and support and administrative staff. Through a network of borough, neighborhood, and courthouse offices in 26 locations in New York City, LAS provides comprehensive legal services in all five boroughs of New York City for clients who cannot afford to pay for private counsel.

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

The Legal Aid Society's unique value is an ability to go beyond any one case to create more equitable outcomes for individuals and broader, more powerful systemic change for society as a whole. In addition to the annual caseload of 300,000 individual cases and legal matters, LAS's law reform representation for clients benefits more than 1.7 million low-income families and individuals in New York City and the landmark rulings in many of these cases have a State-wide and national impact.

The Legal Aid Society is uniquely positioned to speak on issues of law and policy as they relate to homeless New Yorkers. The Legal Aid Society is counsel to the Coalition for the Homeless and for homeless women and men in the *Callahan* and *Eldredge* cases. The Legal Aid Society is also counsel in the *McCain/Boston* litigation in which a final judgment requires the provision of lawful shelter to homeless families. LAS, in collaboration with Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler, LLC, filed *C.W. v. City of New York*, a federal class action lawsuit on behalf of runaway

and homeless youth in New York City. Legal Aid, along with institutional plaintiffs Coalition for the Homeless and Center for Independence of the Disabled-NY (CIDNY), settled *Butler v. City of New York* on behalf of all disabled New Yorkers experiencing homelessness. Also, during the pandemic, The Legal Aid Society along with Coalition for the Homeless continued to support homeless New Yorkers through litigation, including *E.G. v. City of New York*, Federal class action litigation initiated to ensure WiFi access for students in DHS and HRA shelters, as well as *Fisher v. City of New York*, a lawsuit filed in New York State Supreme Court to ensure homeless single adults gain access to private hotel rooms instead of congregate shelters during the pandemic.

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

The Coalition operates 11 direct-services programs that offer vital services to homeless, at-risk, and low-income New Yorkers. These programs also demonstrate effective, long-term, scalable solutions and include: Permanent housing for formerly homeless families and individuals living with HIV/AIDS; job-training for homeless and low-income women; and permanent housing for formerly homeless families and individuals. Our summer sleep-away camp and after-school program help hundreds of homeless children each year. The Coalition's mobile soup kitchen, which usually distributes 800 to 1,000 nutritious hot meals each night to homeless and hungry New Yorkers on the streets of Manhattan and the Bronx, had to increase our meal production and distribution by as much as 40 percent and has distributed PPE and emergency supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, our Crisis Services Department assists more than 1,000 homeless and at-risk households each month with eviction prevention, individual advocacy, referrals for shelter and emergency food programs, and assistance with public benefits as well as basic necessities such as diapers, formula, work uniforms, and money for medications and groceries. In response to the pandemic, we are operating a special Crisis Hotline (1-888-358-2384) for homeless individuals who need immediate help finding shelter or meeting other critical needs.

The Coalition was founded in concert with landmark right-to-shelter litigation filed on behalf of homeless men and women (*Callahan v. Carey* and *Eldredge v. Koch*) and remains a plaintiff in these now consolidated cases. In 1981, the City and State entered into a consent decree in *Callahan* through which they agreed: "The City defendants shall provide shelter and board to each homeless man who applies for it provided that (a) the man meets the need standard to qualify for the home relief program established in New York State; or (b) the man by reason of physical, mental or social dysfunction is in need of temporary shelter." The *Eldredge* case extended this legal requirement to homeless single women. The *Callahan* consent decree and the *Eldredge* case also guarantee basic standards for shelters for homeless men and women. Pursuant to the decree, the Coalition serves as court-appointed monitor of municipal shelters for homeless single adults, and the City has also authorized the Coalition to monitor other facilities serving homeless families. In 2017, the Coalition, fellow institutional plaintiff Center for Independence

of the Disabled – New York, and homeless New Yorkers with disabilities were represented by The Legal Aid Society and pro-bono counsel White & Case in the settlement of *Butler v. City of New York*, which is designed to ensure that the right to shelter includes accessible accommodations for those with disabilities, consistent with Federal, State, and local laws. During the pandemic, the Coalition has worked with The Legal Aid Society to support homeless New Yorkers, including through the *E.G. v. City of New York* Federal class action litigation initiated to ensure WiFi access for students in DHS and HRA shelters, as well as *Fisher v. City of New York*, a lawsuit filed in New York State Supreme Court to ensure homeless single adults gain access to private hotel rooms instead of congregate shelters during the pandemic.



Make the Road New York
Testimony to NYC Council Immigration Committee
9/30/2022

My name is Natalia Aristizabal Betancur and I am the Deputy Director at Make the Road New York. On behalf of our 25,000+ members and staff, we thank the Committee for the opportunity to testify today about this dangerous political stunt being perpetrated by various southern states, particularly Texas, which has caused the displacement of migrants to New York. We believe that New York must continue to serve as a welcoming city for all immigrants, and that includes ensuring that individuals can access and participate in our society regardless of their immigration status. The problem we're seeing today is that states like Texas appear to be using deceptive practices to displace migrants just to score political points and without any consideration for the wellbeing of these individuals. To prevent further harm, the City must develop community-based infrastructure and services that will allow them to rebuild their lives here.

Make the Road New York (MRNY) is the largest grassroots immigrant organization in New York City, with a membership of over 25,000 low-income New Yorkers. We have 25 plus years of experience serving New York's communities of color, immigrant and working class families. Across all our 5 sites, we provide essential health, legal, education and survival services, while also continuing to organize our communities to innovate policies that will improve their lives. We submit this testimony to highlight how our organization has responded to the critical needs presented by the migrants being relocated to our city from Texas, and to underscore to the Committee the critical importance of using all resources available to meet their specific needs in this challenging and often confusing moment. Based on our long history and deep experience working with and alongside immigrant populations, we offer our insight to underscore that the City must immediately step up its efforts to provide resources in a number of key areas to minimize the extended trauma these newly arrived families have endured; to ensure they have what is needed to stabilize their lives, and to provide opportunities which will allow them to fully integrate into our rich, diverse NYC community.

A. Our Rapid Response Efforts

Our fight to ensure dignity and justice for New York's low-income and working class communities of color has always included real-time efforts to provide resources and support for the most marginalized in New York City and beyond, and our efforts have continued to meet this

current moment. Since August, MRNY has helped lead efforts to support asylum-seeking immigrants sent to our city by the governors of Texas, Florida, and Arizona. Most of the newcomers have arrived with nothing but the clothes on their backs.

Over the course of the last two months, when hearing about an arriving bus, we would dispatch staff to Port Authority to greet new arrivals and distribute: cash to purchase food and other essentials, Metrocards, phones, and information about our services. More recently, since the City opened the Navigation Center in the first week of September, we have shifted our operations there and are focused on distributing prepaid cell phones to our newly arriving neighbors. Our staff and volunteers are there 3 days a week, and we have distributed over 200 phones per week, each week that we have been onsite. Because of demonstrated need for this kind of assistance, we have organized 3 distribution days this month at one of our community centers, away from the Navigation Center, where we have been able to welcome these individuals with a meal, 2 Metrocards and a phone.

Additionally, we have held four orientation sessions in our Jackson Heights and Bushwick offices last week to further connect with these individuals. Welcoming these folks into our office was a great way to receive them with open arms - introduce them to our mission, walk them through the resources we provide and answer their questions around legal, health, workforce development and obtaining a driver's license—critical questions for new arrivals who often have no family or sponsor. These orientations will continue to help us stay in touch with and best support the new arrivals.

B. Our Growing Understanding of These Migrants' Experience

Our concern is the manner in which many of them are being deceived into taking a cross-country journey without any care for their health or personal circumstances. For instance, no state should be allowed to use its power to trick individuals into jeopardizing their immigration proceedings. Yet, that is precisely what we have heard and learned during our community sessions with many of the migrants that Texas has sent here. Some of them, for example, shared with us that they were offered free rides to New York—even though they had appointments with immigration authorities in places like Utah. Many of them were surprised to hear that New York was nowhere near where they needed to be in order to attend critical appointments with immigration authorities. Making matters worse, many were dismayed to hear that they now needed to file motions and other paperwork to transfer their immigration cases to New York to avoid dire legal consequences, such as in absentia deportation orders—all without having the resources to obtain legal representation.

Using deceptive tactics to relocate unwanted migrants is troubling enough. But deceiving them while knowing that they may be ordered deported in absentia is cruel and inhumane. We are

committed to ensuring that members of our immigrant communities are treated fairly, with dignity, and with respect. To that end we will continue to work with these families to ensure their rights are protected and vindicated.

C. The City Must and Can do Better

We recognize the challenges that the City is facing as a result of this situation. Texas is not coordinating these buses with our City, the federal government has not intervened, and it is unclear how long Texas and other southern states will continue to relocate migrants to New York. Despite these challenges, the City can and must continue to improve the infrastructure to help these migrants.

Immigration Legal Services: The City rightly decided to incorporate triage services as part of the Navigation Center it opened a few weeks ago, but the City must develop a community-informed long-term plan to ensure these individuals have the legal assistance they desperately need. These individuals need as much information as possible about their immigration proceedings, because Texas is not explaining what may happen to them if they fail to attend their hearings or appointments with immigration authorities in another state. Likewise, this committee is well aware of how important it is to ensure immigrants do not fall prey to notarios, and this population may be particularly vulnerable to their unscrupulous practices. The triage model that the City has deployed so far serves a real need here by offering critical information and short-term legal assistance.

The City needs to develop a better long-term plan. First, accessing the Navigation Center and the City's legal services must be simpler; people should be allowed to make appointments themselves. Right now, only certain City agencies and community-based organizations are allowed to make appointments at the Navigation Center. This model forces people to find the right staff or organization at a moment when many of them are struggling to simply get around the City. Second, most if not all of these individuals lack the fundamental resources—many don't even have a base of family support in the City—to secure legal representation, which they desperately need now and in the near future, as their immigration court proceedings get closer to trial. To meet both short and long-term needs, the City must do better than the recent Request for Proposals issued, which proposes to allocate merely \$5 million for two years to offer this suite of services to *100 individuals per day*—all of which amounts to roughly \$100 per individual case. It is impossible to realistically serve that many people with such a small investment from the City, especially when so many legal providers are already struggling with capacity issues. We urge a more robust investment in these critical services.

Education Services: The City must use all available resources to fund our schools and prevent any reductions previously contemplated. With the addition of over [3,000 asylum-seeking](#)

[students](#) to our K-12 population that will need a range of resources to acclimate and thrive, the city must prioritize resourcing mental health supports, language access, and academic supports. Even before the scale of asylum-seeker arrivals was becoming clear, we and allies were urging the administration to restore the funding cuts to the public education system. We continue to urge the administration to reverse course to ensure that the public school system has the resources it needs to meet the needs of all students, including asylum seekers.

Housing Services: The city must immediately expand the capacity of the shelter system to make space for those who require it, and ensure that the shelters are adequately staffed to meet this new population's need to access benefits. This includes providing services that are culturally appropriate and language accessible. Also, the City must better facilitate the movement of all shelter occupants from temporary to permanent housing through existing programs such as CityFHEPS. The City has immediate tools to utilize to help alleviate this shelter crisis: 1) It can make CityFHEPS available for all immigrants, including those asylum-seekers who have yet to be considered PRUCOL for purposes of receiving public assistance benefits and who have to date have been excluded from eligibility. 2) It must eliminate the requirement that individuals and families stay for 90-days in shelter before becoming eligible to receive assistance to move into permanent housing. This rule does little to ensure the integrity of the available housing subsidy programs, and instead results in families languishing for extended periods of time. [The City's own recent report](#) detailed that on average, families are staying 534 days in the shelter system. The City should swiftly utilize these tools to alleviate some of the pressure on the system overall, and provide a path towards long-term stability for families and individuals currently in shelter.

Food and Transportation: The City must ensure that those who are placed in all types of shelter settings have access to food and / or hot meals. Many of these newly arrived families are not eligible for federal forms of food support, and it is imperative that families have access to healthy meals. In addition to ensuring these families have access to food, the City must develop a plan to provide transportation assistance so that families are able to access school, work, and other needed appointments as they integrate into our city life.

In sum, we urge the City to take the steps outlined above in order to move towards more inclusive, thriving outcomes for this population of newly arrived New Yorkers as they seek to integrate into our communities.



Date: Friday, September 30, 2022

Immigration Committee Hearing

Subject: Resources and Services for Newly Arrived Asylum Seekers

- Good afternoon, my name is Nilbia Coyote, I'm the Executive Director at New Immigrant Community Empowerment, or NICE, one of the largest CBO in Jackson Heights, Queens. I will deliver this testimony on behalf of hundreds of asylum seekers that are now members of NICE but who do not want to reveal their identity or participate in this hearing out of fear.
- NICE's mission is to organize new immigrants, day laborers, and families in New York City to build their collective power. To achieve this, we combine the strength of workforce development training and education on worker rights, advocacy and programs tailored to immigrant workers.
- NICE has always supported recently arrived immigrants and asylum seekers and has become known as a safe haven for all. In recent months, there has been an exponential growth in demand for our services, mostly our workforce development services.
- So why does our organization matter for asylum seekers?
 - Because the reality is that these new companeros and companeras are in dire need of a stable situation: dignified housing, food, clothing for the winter, but to plan for their future, **they need a steady job and safe income.**
 - Without legitimate work permits and information on how to stay safe and protect themselves, **they are at grave risk of workplace safety violations, injury, and even death as thousands of other undocumented New Yorkers are already.**
 - This is why hundreds of asylum seekers are coming to our Center and offices every week. Just over 350 last night to our Orientation for new members.
 - What is for sure is that asylum seekers are now joining the ranks of the very vulnerable workforce of new immigrants, day laborers and undocumented workers looking for "trabajitos" or small jobs in the construction industry to make some money. And that's how eventually at the paradas (or corners) and worker centers like ours they found out about the OSHA card, worker rights and what they need to do to work in the informal market of the construction industry.
 - Currently our OSHA and SST trainings, Skills Development Training and wage theft clinics are filled out by asylum seekers and new immigrants.
 - NICE also offers food 3 times per week, we have donations of clothing, cash assistance, we connect the community with the shelter system and we go beyond our capacity with compassion, care, and SOLIDARITY.

- **At NICE we are concentrating our efforts on workforce development for asylum seekers because their long term economic integration is often an invisible barrier no one is talking about.** New immigrants are already being exploited by wage theft and unscrupulous employers, who abuse their desperation. **We cannot let that happen! In the coming year, NICE has the ability to train new immigrants and asylum seekers and give them the tools they need to thrive regardless of their immigration status. But we can only do it with the continued support of the City and other gov.**
- We nevertheless ask the City council members and the Administration to continue the conversation on these other needs of asylum seekers and thousands of immigrant workers in the City. Along with legal services, food, housing, **dignified jobs and worker rights are fundamental to the integration and contribution of new immigrants to our City.**
- **And lastly, we ask to continue fighting for the** thousands of immigrants who have been fighting for legal status and Immigration Reform for years in our City.
- Thank you very much.

The New York City Charter School Center
Melissa Katz Director, The Collaborative for Inclusive Education
Written Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Immigration

Oversight Hearing on Resources and Services for Newly Arrived Asylum Seekers
Friday, September 30, 2022

Dear Chairperson Hanif and members of the New York City Council Committee on Immigration. My name is Melissa Katz and I am the Director of [The Collaborative for Inclusive Education](#), an initiative of [The New York City Charter School Center](#) (Charter Center). Thank you for the opportunity to present my written testimony.

NYC charter schools have been eager to do their part to serve the families coming to our city in search of a better life. In order to fit into the enrollment process created by NYC DOE, the Charter Center reached out across the sector to ascertain which schools had the room, and as importantly, the structures and capacity to effectively educate these students. We then submitted a list of 24 schools to Tweed; this is in addition to the schools that reached out directly on their own. We will continue to welcome the newest residents of NYC in partnership for as long as is needed to help solve the humanitarian crisis and beyond.

We anticipate many of the newly arrived students will need mental health services as well as English language development supports. While they are not quite analogous, we believe some of the lessons learned during the pandemic, which disproportionately impacted MLLs/ELLs, will guide us in our efforts with the asylum seekers.

During the pandemic, charter schools stepped up to the challenge and were quickest to transition to remote instruction for all students. However, even with a quick response, MLL/ELL families were disproportionately affected during this period of time for reasons including lack of internet access, no affordable child-care options, issues with obtaining needed technology, and lack of technical support in home languages. As such, as budgets are built out, we advocate for increased funding and resources for technology and for translation.

In terms of MLL/ELL student school supports, the Collaborative for Inclusive Education is focusing on teacher/leader development in charter schools. MLL/ELL enrollment in charter schools has increased by 39% since SY19-20; 9% of all students in charter schools are classified as MLL/ELL and over 100 charters have preferences for MLL/ELL students in their lotteries. With an increase of multilingual student enrollment comes the need for more teacher professional learning targeted towards English language development. 80% of all charter schools in the city are members and have access to our centralized trainings and workshops on supporting students access grade level content, as well as trauma-informed practices and culturally responsive practices. We are also

facilitating a second cohort of MLL/ELL leaders across the sector after last year's successful inaugural cohort to build out a peer network, share ideas for supporting MLLs/ELLs and their families, and also to create new resources that support MLL/ELL programming and academic support. While collaboration between NYC district and Charter schools in this area has been limited under the prior administration, we look forward to using this opportunity to build partnerships with the district to share best practices by bringing educators together to best support these students and families. In this spirit, we ask that any trainings and resources made available to support asylum seekers be shared with charter schools.

The charter sector has been working diligently over the past decade with the support of The Collaborative for Inclusive Education to address the academic and social needs of MLL/ELL families and we will continue to do so in service of the recently arrived families to address the diverse needs of them and other MLL/ELL families in various and unique ways including: creating bilingual family hubs, having weekly curriculum family meetings in multiple languages, and connecting families with various services in order to provide additional support with basic and family needs during this time. We would be interested in having future meetings with this committee to provide anecdotes from the charter sector field to support the decisions the committee makes in the future regarding MLL/ELL students in New York City Public Schools. We thank you for your shared commitment to the families seeking shelter in our city and look forward to being part of the solutions to address their needs.



Testimony of Zach Iscol
Commissioner
New York City Department of Emergency Management
Before the New York City Council Committee on Immigration
September 30, 2022

Good afternoon, Chairperson Hanif, and members of the Committee. I am Zach Iscol, Commissioner of New York City Emergency Management, and I am here to discuss the coordinating role that New York City Emergency Management is playing in the current surge in asylum seekers in New York City.

First, I want to briefly explain our role in City government and emergency response. New York City Emergency Management helps New Yorkers before, during, and after emergencies through preparedness, education, and response. The agency is responsible for coordinating citywide emergency planning and response for all types and sizes of emergencies. It is staffed by more than 200 dedicated professionals with diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise, including individuals detailed from other City agencies. As the coordinating agency for the City of New York, Emergency Management functions as a general facilitator when it comes to emergency response: ensuring that resources are available for our sister agencies to complete their core competencies and serving New Yorkers in what can be their worst days with compassion and cultural competency.

The recent influx of asylum seekers seeking refuge in New York City is a challenging task and a great example of collaboration among city agencies. We are facing a humanitarian crisis and it has never been clearer that we need to help and support.

Emergency Management continues to coordinate between the incoming buses of asylum seekers and provide logistical support to the operations of the Asylum Seeker Resource Navigation Center. The center, opened on August 25th and operated by Catholic Charities of New York through a city contract, streamlines city and non-profit services into a one-stop-shop. It serves as a central place for newly arrived asylum seekers to receive free and confidential help accessing important services and resources that will help them integrate and thrive in New York City. Emergency Management is also coordinating with City agency partners at the Welcome Center located at the Port Authority. Those arriving can receive light medical care, water, PPE, and COVID testing; EMS is also located there in the event that someone needs emergency treatment. Individuals can also receive information for shelter in the event they do not have friends, family, or a sponsor to lean on.

Emergency Management is also coordinating the opening of Humanitarian Emergency Response and Relief Centers. The first, in Orchard Beach, will serve adults and likely open within the next week. These centers will be operated by Emergency Management and Health & Hospitals, completely outside of the DHS shelter system. They will be the first touchpoint for arriving asylum seekers by immediately offering shelter, food, medical care, casework services, and a range of settlement options including through connections to family and friends inside and outside of New York City, in addition to, if needed, direct referrals to alternative emergency supports or city shelters. All spaces will be safe, secure, climate-controlled and are built to withstand weather year-round. Emergency Management has an emergency contract that will provide for wraparound services such as: food and water, clothes, care products, and other human service needs.



This is a true interagency effort, and we continue to work with our partner agencies, as well as contracted partners and providers, to provide comprehensive on-site services and referrals. We do not know when the influx of asylum seekers will end or slow down, but we are here for the duration. New York City is a cultural mecca enriched by its diverse population, and a second home to those who make the difficult decision to leave their home country in search of opportunities. Emergency Management is proud to assist in this humanitarian effort. It is not only our responsibility as a city to help them adjust and regain their livelihoods, but it is an important investment in the future of New York.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify today.

Testimony by the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG)
before the NYC Council Committee on Immigration regarding:
Resources and Services for Newly Arrived Asylum Seekers

September 30, 2022

Chair Hanif, Council Members, and staff, good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to speak to the Immigration Committee about resources for newly arrived asylum seekers. My name is Jodi Ziesemer, and I am the Director of the Immigrant Protection Unit at the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG). NYLAG uses the power of the law to help New Yorkers in need combat social, racial, and economic injustice. We address emerging and urgent legal needs with comprehensive, free civil legal services, impact litigation, policy advocacy, and community education. NYLAG serves immigrants, seniors, the homebound, families facing foreclosure, renters facing eviction, low-income consumers, those in need of government assistance, children in need of special education, domestic violence victims, persons with disabilities, patients with chronic illness or disease, low-wage workers, low-income members of the LGBTQ community, Holocaust survivors, veterans, as well as others in need of free legal services.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify to the Immigration Committee regarding recently arrived asylum seekers. NYLAG is proud to operate in a City that values its immigrant citizens and supports much-needed services to them and to respond to urgent needs as a ‘sanctuary city’ that models programming and services to the nation. NYLAG along with other legal service providers have engaged with newly arrived asylum-seeking families through our various community based sites, at our central offices, and by sending staff on a voluntary basis to the newly opened Asylum Resource Navigation Center.

The Immigration Landscape

The current ‘crisis’ stems from the intersection of various federal policies which have closed our borders to most asylum seekers for the last three years while failing to put in place strategies or resources to safely, effectively, and humanely anticipate the influx of vulnerable migrants who cannot be subjected to rapid expulsion. This has created chaos and confusion at the border and inconsistent treatment of these asylum-seeking families. The federal government has failed to provide systems or support to manage the flow and processing of families and this burden has fallen heavily on border states. In response, the Governors of Texas, Arizona, and Florida have marshalled resources to transport newly arrived migrants to other jurisdictions. While this has been messaged as political stunting and certainly has an element of sensationalism, it has also distributed the urgent need to locales better resourced to absorb and address them.

The majority of families and individuals who are being bussed and flown to New York are from Venezuela and Cuba with a smaller number from other South American countries such as Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Brazil. The broad public health barrier to admitting asylum seekers at the border—Title 42—is still operational; however, due to the lack of diplomatic ties and ability to effectuate expulsions to certain South American countries, nationals from those countries presenting at our borders are exempted from Title 42 and permitted to enter the U.S. The federal government has chosen to subject these migrants to intense surveillance by ICE and place them in removal proceedings—a policy choice that the Administration has not forced on other vulnerable populations seeking safety in the U.S. such as Ukrainians and Afghans. Adding to the confusion, both ICE and the Immigration Court system, already at a saturation point prior to this recent influx, have buckled under the current inundation of charging documents and the number of people they are being suddenly asked to monitor, surveil, and schedule for appointments and hearings. The result is a haphazard application of existing processes with some families being scheduled for hearings rapidly—as soon as a week or two after

their arrival—while many others languish without charging documents, being told to attend appointments to begin their removal process in the summer of 2024.

These newly arrived migrants, mostly from Venezuela, also differ from past waves of asylum-seeking families in that they lack familial and community ties to the U.S. They are truly fleeing a repressive regime that has precipitated an economic collapse. Venezuela is currently the source of the second largest external displacement crisis in the world.¹ Because of the absence of family or friends to receive them, many of these newly arrived migrants do not have a set destination in the U.S. or a fixed address to provide to officials at the border. This has compounded the confusion with immigration paperwork as ICE and CBP do not know where to file court documents, have no address to send follow up paperwork, and cannot effectively direct people to the resources that they will need to navigate the removal process. Instead of confronting these barriers, ICE and CBP have employed a variety of deceitful and legally prejudicial policies such as fabricating addresses on their charging documents, sending their cases to far flung jurisdictions, and supplying nonsensical or contradictory information and instructions. Funneling large numbers of people to a small handful of ‘sanctuary cities’ has also overburdened all the systems in those cities especially the ICE Enforcement and Removal Office—in charge of the surveillance and monitoring of migrants who have been parole across the border with the anticipation of a removal process. People with ICE appointments are waiting in line outside of 26 Federal Plaza at one or two in the morning to ensure being admitted for a 9am appointment.

The Legal Need

The legal need is twofold and must be addressed with two distinct programs and funding structures. The first need is for information, individual engagement to provide guidance on the posture and next steps on the immigration process, and assistance in changing addresses and venue. Because of the deep confusion, inconsistencies and nuances in individual cases, group orientations and general information

¹ <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/venezuela-emergency.html#:~:text=In%20the%20past%2C%20Venezuela%20hosted,displacement%20crisis%20in%20the%20world.>

packets are insufficient to address this need. Migrants want and need individual guidance and counsel on their options, next steps, and process. Although this information giving should be overseen by legal employees, lawyers should not be the primary on-the-ground staff for this element of the response. The need is too great and too broad for staff line attorneys at non-profit legal service organizations to cover and it is not an effective use of the limited human resources in our city. Ideally, this initial triage and information would be provided by mobilized volunteers—pro bono attorneys and/or community organizers—with the framework, training, and oversight provided by a legal service organization.

Legal triage must be accompanied by a renewed investment in robust removal defense representation and advice and counsel. The need for attorneys to screen, advise, and represent individuals and families in removal proceedings has been growing exponentially in the past five years. The New York Immigration Court expanded from one location to three and from 35 judges to 69 judges (with 8-10 additional judges to be onboarded in the next two months).² Likewise, the number of immigrants in removal proceedings has skyrocketed to more than one million pending cases nationwide while funding for removal defense legal services has largely remained static. As has often been reported, having representation makes a significant difference in the outcome of an asylum claim. It is critical that the city re-invest in attorneys to provide robust advice and counsel and full representation to not only this population of newly arrived asylum seekers but the thousands of other New York-based asylum seekers who have been on the waitlists of non-profit organizations for years. These are not legally distinct populations, and the need should be addressed holistically.

Many non-profit legal service organizations are facing a crisis with recruitment, training, supervision, and space for new attorneys. There are a limited number of attorneys who have the language and substantive skills for this challenging work, and it takes resources to properly train and supervise inexperienced law graduates. An influx of funding—which is what we are requesting—would also create competition amongst legal services organization for staffing which is why it is best to limit the

² <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/eoir-immigration-court-listing#NY>

use of attorneys to the areas in which they can be most effective—full representation in removal proceedings. The flexibility of the IOI removal defense program or the ICARE funding provide models for effective removal defense programming to cover asylum-seekers.

Finally, legal triage and full representation will not be able to immediately or comprehensively meet the need. There needs to be investment in pro se models of legal assistance for those who cannot be represented. Pro se application assistance clinics, pro bono mentoring, law school clinics, and large-scale volunteer efforts with quality control from legal services organizations are critical to fill in the gaps, provide bridge programming while services ramp up, and to flex as the needs shift and change. Coalition building and coordination amongst these various entities is essential to ensuring streamlined service delivery and effective deployment of resources. Funding innovative programming and incubating new models is important to shift and evolve with the need.

I want to once again take the opportunity to thank Chair Hanif and the members of the Committee for their exceptional leadership and commitment to overseeing issues related to immigration in New York City, and for working to schedule this hearing today. I welcome the opportunity to discuss any of these matters with the Committee further.

Respectfully submitted,

New York Legal Assistance Group



Thank you to the Committee on Immigration for inviting testimony today. My name is Alexandra Rizio and I am the Managing Attorney for Policy and Partnerships at Safe Passage Project, a non-profit legal services organization that provides free representation to immigrant children facing deportation. We serve children who live in the five boroughs of New York City and in the two counties of Long Island. The support of the City of New York has been instrumental in our work. Safe Passage Project stands ready to assist the city as it deals with the arrival of an increasing numbers of migrants, including those bussed here in cynical attempts to disrupt their lives and to challenge our status as a sanctuary.

No immigrant, not even a child, is appointed a lawyer in immigration court. If a child cannot afford to hire a lawyer, they will be forced to defend themselves alone, against a trained government prosecutor and a judge, with deportation back to dangerous conditions as the likely outcome. Safe Passage Project helps correct this injustice by providing free attorneys to kids. Beyond legal services, our social work team addresses the broader needs of clients, such as school enrollment, homelessness, access to health care, psychological services, and public benefits.

The City of New York does its best to live its values as a city of immigrants, and as a sanctuary for those looking for a better life. The City Council has supported our work through the Unaccompanied Minors Initiative and the IOI grant stream. Without your unwavering support, which we've had since 2014, Safe Passage would not be able to serve our more than 1,200 clients. As you know, though, there is still more to do, and recent events have put a strain on all city services.

Though the City's efforts to triage the increasing number of migrants arriving by busing are admirable, I encourage the Council to look beyond the present situation with an eye towards the grim realities of our immigration system. Of course, the immediate needs of asylum seekers coming to New York should be at the forefront: food, housing, medical care. But we also need to deal with the multi-layered, and often intentionally cruel, legal barriers that these migrants face, and that requires long-term, fulsome investment in legal services.

When I have volunteered at Port Authority, I saw migrants arriving with ICE check-in documents requiring the migrants to attend physical appointments in far-flung cities to which the migrants have no connection, and never planned to visit. Their "intended addresses" were listed as Illinois, Nevada, and Washington State, among others. A colleague reviewed a migrant's



documents, which said they planned to reside in Disney Land. It seems clear that there is a concerted effort among border officials to create legal chaos for the migrants—chaos that can result in *in absentia* removal orders or re-detention in ICE jails. The incorrect addresses alone require written motions and concerted advocacy to correct, which cannot be accomplished without legal representation. Furthermore, complex asylum cases like the ones many Venezuelan political refugees present can take years to wind through the immigration system. We need full-scale investment in legal services to address these issues. It cannot be accomplished through a *pro se* representation model or Know Your Rights presentations alone.

Legal service providers are already at capacity, with caseloads that approach the unsustainable. We need resources to develop long-term hiring plans, time to scale up services and recruit and train attorneys. We have the expertise to accomplish this, but need increased investment from government entities and funders to make it happen.

Again, I applaud the City for stepping up to this extreme, politically-manufactured challenge. Nonprofits like Safe Passage Project are ready to continue providing human-centered, trauma-informed services for our clients. Together, we can ensure that migrants are treated with dignity and respect, and that they receive the process they are due under law.



**NYC Council Committee on Immigration
Oversight Hearing - Resources and Services for Newly Arrived Asylum Seekers
September 30, 2022**

Seeking Asylum & Finding Empowerment is an advocacy organization and service provider that focuses on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) asylum seekers.

Asylum seekers have faced serious challenges since long before the latest stunts by xenophobic politicians. From the then-record deportations of Obama to the chaos of the immigration bureaucracy under Trump, asylum seekers have borne the brunt of this country's turbulent recent record on immigration. The inherently racist system is plagued with dysfunction of an enormous magnitude. Amidst the turmoil, this country has managed to retain its humanitarian commitment to asylum and refugee status.

Unfortunately, the process by which immigrants apply for and receive asylum is one that is in itself a harrowing journey. Those individuals now being illegally sent from other states must now confront a city as unprepared to take them as it is to serve those already here. Despite being informed by advocates for years about the lack of infrastructure to assist asylum seekers, New York City has not taken the necessary steps. Council funding, for example, prioritized assistance for certain immigrants involved in the criminal justice system and for slam-dunk cases such as citizenship applications. In the meantime, asylum seekers were left without vital services. The consequences for asylum seekers left without qualified legal assistance are severe: missed deadlines, vulnerability to scams, and even deportation.

Few city agencies are prepared to serve asylum seekers, which necessarily means coordinating between multiple agencies and nonprofit partners. Asylum seekers and asylees report to SAFE that frontline staff at agencies such as the Human Resources Administration struggle to properly process applications from immigrants eligible for benefits. Even IDNYC, a program the city holds out as evidence of its immigrant-friendliness, refuses to accept paperwork from asylum seekers paroled into the U.S. SAFE encourages this Committee to hold hearings to examine how

each relevant agency serves immigrant New Yorkers, especially asylum seekers. To illustrate the interconnectedness of these issues, consider that filing an asylum application is the first step to gaining work authorization and access to many programs. Legal services, therefore, are critical not just to winning asylum cases but to helping newcomers gain financial stability.

LGBTQ+ asylum seekers are one of the biggest and most easily identifiable groups with viable asylum claims. Despite this, their special concerns are often overlooked. This point is especially important in light of the concerns that SAFE has with this Administration. This Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs has never reached out to SAFE or our partners, or publicly spoken about in support of LGBTQ+ asylum seekers. In fact, over the vociferous opposition of LGBTQ+ and immigrant communities, Mayor Adams continues to employ Erick Salgado, who has a history of encouraging discrimination and violence against LGBTQ+ New Yorkers.

SAFE asks the Council to press the Administration on how the shelters and the Emergency Response Center are being equipped to interact with LGBTQ+ asylum seekers in a culturally competent way. SAFE also encourages the Council to continue to press the Administration on vital services beyond housing and legal assistance, including mental health services in different languages.

Finally, SAFE encourages the Council to re-examine its own priorities and do more to aid the overworked and underfunded organizations that have been tirelessly working to ensure asylum seekers have the legal and social services they need and deserve. Inexplicably, the Council cut funding in this year's budget to at least one life-saving program aimed at addressing the gap in legal services to asylum seekers.

Without properly funding services for asylum seekers, the elected officials who are highlighting this issue risk doing the very same thing they are condemning, namely using these immigrants as political props. It is time to move beyond performativity and actually make the necessary policy changes and investment in services.



Selfhelp Community Services, Inc.
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Testimony from Selfhelp Community Services
New York City Council
September 30, 2022
Resources and Services for Newly Arrived Asylum Seekers
Submitted by: Katie Foley

Thank you to the NYC Council for holding a timely hearing on such an important topic.

Selfhelp Community Services is a non-profit serving 25,000 older and vulnerable adults each year through home health care, affordable housing, and skilled social services while remaining the largest provider of comprehensive services to Holocaust survivors in North America.

Our services are extensive and include: Citywide specialized programs for Holocaust Survivors; fifteen affordable senior housing residences; four Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) programs; three intensive case management programs; five senior centers including one of New York City's first Innovative Senior Centers; home health care; the Virtual Senior Center; court-appointed guardianship; the Selfhelp Alzheimer's Resource Program (SHARP); and New York Connects in Queens.

We urge the relevant government agencies to grant legal work authorization to all those coming to NYC trying to build a new life in NYC. Selfhelp is ready, willing, and able to provide free job training and placement to anyone legally able to work.

Since our founding, 85 years ago, Selfhelp has been providing job training and placement for refugees and immigrants coming to NYC. In 1936 it was for Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi-occupied Europe. Today it is for immigrants from all over the world. During WWII, Selfhelp focused on helping European refugees find work, housing, and community. Selfhelp's caregiver job training programs in the 1930s and 1940s led to the formation of Selfhelp's Homemaker and Home Nursing programs, the precursors of today's home care aide training program.

Older and vulnerable New Yorkers rely on well-trained and caring home care aides and there is a shortage of home care aides in New York City. Becoming a home care aide is meaningful

work that is available in all boroughs and in many languages. Each home care case is unique which offers flexibility for people who want to build their own schedule with part-time or full-time hours.

In 8 days, someone can train to become a Personal Care Aide. With new Personal Care Aide and Home Health Aide classes offered every month, we want to be able to bring asylum seekers into our home care aide training classes (offered in English, Spanish, and Russian). Selfhelp provides financial support to cover the costs of the physical exam and transportation as well as support navigating the certification process. Jobs are available immediately upon successful completion of training and certification.

We urge the relevant government agencies to do their part in granting work authorization for all those who are ready to work. We are proud to be continuing a legacy of 85 years of job training and placement for those fleeing their home countries looking for a better life for their families.

Testimony submitted by:

Katie Foley, MSW

Managing Director, External Affairs and Communications

Selfhelp Community Services

Regarding: NYC Migrant Response and Planned Tent Cities

From: Mutual Aid Collective / Colectivo de Ayuda Mutua

**South Bronx Mutual Aid
Inmigrantes de Nueva York (IENY) Ayuda Mutua
La Morada Mutual Aid Kitchen
NYC ICEWatch
Colectiva Somoslacélula
Take Back the Bronx
Rev. Micah Bucey, Judson Memorial Church
Fr. Luis Barrios, Holyrood Church
Rev. Schuyler Vogel, Fourth Universalist Society in the City of New York
Rev. Lea Matthews, St. Paul & St. Andrew UMC
Rev. Schuyler Vogel, Fourth Universalist Society in the City of New York
Rabbi Barat Ellman, Brooklyn
Respond Crisis Translation
Autonomous Mutual Aid Organizers, Activists, and Volunteers**

Published September 29, 2022

**Mutual Aid Collective/ Colectivo de Ayuda Mutua
South Bronx Mutual Aid
Inmigrantes de Nueva York (IENY) Ayuda Mutua
La Morada Mutual Aid Kitchen
NYC ICEWatch
Colectiva Somoslacélula
Autonomous Mutual Aid Organizers, Activists, and Volunteers**

English

The mayoral administration of New York under Mayor Adams has announced a plan to build migrant camps in Orchard Beach in the Bronx, near City Island, to house those without stable housing. There are currently over 13,000 migrants, who from May to date, have been transferred in buses from Texas to New York. Last week, New York City signed a \$34 million contract with the Bronx Family Network to build tents to house migrants in parking lots near

open water. Troubling versions of this plan have been presented. We are gravely concerned about the freedom of movement, safety, and lack of access to resources and protection that people without housing in these camps will receive, especially if the buses from Texas are driven directly to the camps, hidden from public view.

With regard to the construction of a migrant tent city in Orchard Beach and more being planned:

1) The city has a responsibility to provide safe accommodations, not camps with fragile structures. A tent is not a substitute for accommodation. This plan sets a dangerous precedent by suggesting that anyone without stable housing may be placed in tents, in remote locations, instead of providing safe, permanent housing. It is violent hypocrisy that the mayor's office destroys the tents of the homeless in the city—who prefer to live on the streets instead of having to use the city's shelters, for different reasons—at the same time building tent camps for other unhoused people.

This plan assumes that the tents can be considered “accommodation.” However, the police have destroyed dozens of homeless encampments in recent months on the grounds that people who are homeless may not be outside in tent encampments. Under what criteria does the city propose that the tents are decent accommodations for any unhoused people? Will the city in the future forcibly send any homeless family or individual, citizen or non-citizen, to a remote encampment as a substitute for safe and stable housing? There are plenty of decent places homeless New Yorkers and recently arrived migrants could use as shelters, including one of the many newly-constructed vacant buildings that have received tax breaks, particularly in the South Bronx.

2) The indicated campsite, Orchard Beach, is very close to the coast, humid and low-lying, completely unsuitable for accommodating people during the fall and even less so in the winter. Orchard Beach is in a flood zone (evacuation zone 1 according to the city); a heavy rain is enough for the entire base of the camp to be flooded. In a few weeks, the temperatures will drop substantially, not to mention the storms and rains that are approaching as soon as this weekend. The surrounding woods in Orchard Beach have been tick infestation sites, which carry Lyme disease. Furthermore, Orchard Beach has been undergoing a rehabilitation process and the establishment of camps will likely produce further erosion.

3) We are concerned about how isolated this site is. We fear and denounce that its location away from the city is precisely the reason why the mayor's office has chosen this site: that no one sees, that no one finds out, that people soon forget about the migrants. Right now, what we see in the shelters that exist is indifference, contempt and abuse. This has been told to us by the dozens of families and single people we have assisted and continue to assist through mutual aid. There are circumstances where shelters serve food that is still frozen, or worse, moldy or rotten food, including expired milk for children. In these shelters, assaults, acts of violence, physical attacks and illegal evictions occur. Taking into account this situation in shelters, we fear that the situation will be much worse in plastic tents that do not provide privacy or protection from inclement weather, storms, or floods, and which will isolate people.

With the arrival of new New Yorkers, there will also be a need for interpreters to help with communication. The lack of Spanish interpreters in the current shelter system has created many difficulties. That deficiency given the size and isolation of this camp will result in dire circumstances. We are also concerned that the isolation of the place is an incentive for people belonging to racist and xenophobic groups to attack our new neighbors. Also, it's unclear how the city plans to transport people back and forth from this remote location.

4) The time it will take for the city to execute this plan is also of concern. The plan is that this camp will be in use in less than two weeks. This implies that dozens of migrants who continue to arrive every day will continue to be at the mercy of the current shelter system, which for many years has already shown its limitations and deficiencies.

Nor do we know what the proposal is to serve families with children, who also continue to arrive every day. The mayor's office has said that they will also be received in other temporary support establishments but has not given more details.

5) The city is offering a temporary solution, a tent, to face a situation that needs permanent solutions. The migrants who are arriving have every right to request political asylum, and their asylum cases will not be resolved in two months, or three or six. These are likely to take years, as are the hundreds, if not thousands, of asylum cases pending in New York courts. On the other hand, Governor Abbott will not stop sending buses, and his allies in Arizona and Florida have already begun to do the same.

With an expenditure of 34 million dollars, we ask ourselves, why not propose and develop a lasting plan that addresses with more permanency the issue of poverty and homelessness? Why not convert more vacant or proposed buildings into housing for the homeless? This would address a structural problem, not only for migrants, but for all homeless people. There are hotels for sale and new buildings without tenants. We wonder why allocate 34 million dollars to a plan that is dangerous, temporary, inhumane and definitely inefficient and inadequate to solve the housing problem in a dignified way. Why not invest in long-term options that allow people to cook their own food, have access to transportation, and mobility to get and keep jobs?

Organizations such as the Coalition For the Homeless, the Legal Aid Society, and others have already declared that this temporary plan, this band-aid or band-aid, is probably not legal because it will not be able to comply with the "Right to Shelter Law" that governs the City of New York. Setting up questionably "heated" thin-walled tents in a flood zone is not a safe or suitable solution. There is no doubt that \$34 million can be used in another more appropriate way to house New Yorkers without stable housing, both those who recently arrived and those who have been here for years in need of decent, stable and low-cost housing.

The Section 8 program and emergency rental assistance must be expanded because New York not only has a migrant crisis, it also has a housing access crisis, both of which were politically manufactured. It is unfathomable to spend millions on something that will be temporary, cut off from resources and transportation, and dangerous and inhumane.

Already many residents of City Island, the community adjacent to Orchard Beach, are demanding a greater police presence in the area "to control migrants." For example, Bill Stanton, president of the City Island Civic Association, an entity that influences local politics, has said that the police must maintain control of the movements of any migrant who is assigned to these camps. Thus, what is being suggested is to make these shelters actually detention camps where migrants will not have the right to move freely. In effect, concentration camps will be erected in the open air. If the history and experiences of the refugee camps that currently exist around the world have taught us anything, it is that any such "camp" where people are confined and isolated due to their identity or origin, has had cruel and fatal consequences.

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Spanish

La alcaldía de Nueva York bajo Mayor Adams, ha anunciado un plan para construir campamentos en Orchard Beach en el Bronx, cerca de City Island para albergar los sin alojamiento. Hay ahora cerca de 13,000 personas migrantes, que desde mayo hasta la fecha, han sido trasladadas en autobuses de Texas a Nueva York. La semana pasada, la ciudad de Nueva York firmó un contrato de 34 millones de dólares con Bronx Family Network para construir carpas para alojar a migrantes en estacionamientos cerca del agua. Se han presentado versiones preocupantes de este plan de acuerdo a la libertad de movimiento, seguridad, y falta de acceso a recursos y protección que recibirán gente sin alojamiento en estos campamentos, especialmente si los buses de Texas son dirigidos directamente a los campamentos, ocultos de la vista del público .

La construcción de un nuevo campamento de detención en Orchard Beach o en cualquier lugar en una ciudad santuaria es inhumano y irrazonable por la siguientes razones:

1) La ciudad tiene la responsabilidad de proveer alojamiento seguro, no campamentos con estructuras frágiles. Una carpa no es un sustituto de alojamiento. Este plan sienta un precedente peligroso al sugerir que cualquier persona sin vivienda estable puede ser ubicada en carpas, en lugares remotos, en lugar de ofrecer alojamiento seguro y permanente. Es hipocresía violenta que la alcaldía destruya las carpas de la gente sin vivienda en la ciudad—quienes prefieren vivir en la calle en vez de tener que usar los albergues de la ciudad, por distintas razones—al mismo tiempo que construye campamentos de carpas para otras personas sin vivienda.

Este plan supone que las carpas pueden ser consideradas “alojamiento”. Sin embargo, la policía ha destruido decenas de campamentos de gente sin vivienda en los últimos meses bajo el argumento de que no lo son. ¿Bajo qué criterio la ciudad propone que las carpas son alojamiento digno y seguro para cualquier persona sin alojamiento? ¿Será que en el futuro, la ciudad mandará a la fuerza a cualquier familia o individuo sin vivienda, ciudadano o no, a un campamento remoto como sustituto de alojamiento seguro y estable? Hay muchos lugares dignos que los neoyorquinos sin vivienda estable y los migrantes recién llegados podrían usar como albergues, como por ejemplo, alguno de los tantos edificios recién construidos y vacíos que han recibido reducciones fiscales en el Sur del Bronx.

2) El sitio indicado del campamento, Orchard Beach, está muy cerca de la costa, por lo que es un lugar húmedo y las temperaturas ahí son más bajas, completamente inadecuadas para alojar a gente durante el otoño y menos el invierno. Orchard Beach está en una zona inundable (zona de evacuación 1 de acuerdo a la ciudad); basta una fuerte lluvia para que toda la base del campamento se inunde. En un par de semanas las temperaturas comenzarán a bajar bastante, y ni hablar de las tormentas y las lluvias que se aproximan tan pronto como este fin de semana. Los bosques circundantes en Orchard Beach han sido sitios de infestación de garrapatas, que transmiten la enfermedad de Lyme. Encima de todo esto, Orchard Beach ha estado en un proceso de rehabilitación y el establecimiento de campamentos va a erosionar aún más este lugar.

3) Nos preocupa lo aislado que está este sitio. Tememos y denunciemos que su ubicación apartada de la ciudad sea precisamente la razón por la que la alcaldía ha elegido este sitio: que nadie vea, que nadie se entere, que la gente se olvide pronto de las y los migrantes. Ahora mismo, lo que observamos en los albergues que existen es la indiferencia, el desprecio y el abuso. Esto nos lo han contado las decenas de familias y personas solteras a las que hemos asistido y seguimos asistiendo mediante ayuda mutua. Hay circunstancias donde los albergues sirven comida que todavía está congelada, o lo que es peor, comida con hongos o podrida, incluyendo leche expirada para los niños. En estos albergues ocurren asaltos, hechos de violencia, ataques físicos y desalojos ilegales. Teniendo en consideración esta situación en los albergues, tememos que la situación será mucho peor en carpas de plástico que no brindan protección ni a la privacidad ni a las inclemencias del frío, las tormentas, o inundaciones, y aíslan a las personas.

Con la llegada de nuevos neoyorquinos también hará falta intérpretes que ayuden con la comunicación. La falta de intérpretes de español en el actual sistema de albergues ha creado muchas dificultades. Esa deficiencia, dado el tamaño y el aislamiento de este campamento, dará lugar a circunstancias nefastas. Nos preocupa también que lo aislado del lugar sea un aliciente para que personas pertenecientes a grupos racistas y xenófobos ataquen a nuestros nuevos vecinos. Además, no queda claro cómo la ciudad planea transportar a las personas de ida y vuelta desde este lugar tan apartado.

4) El tiempo que le tomará a la ciudad ejecutar este plan también causa preocupación. El plan es que este campamento entrará en uso en menos de dos semanas. Esto implica que decenas de migrantes que siguen llegando cada día seguirán quedando a la merced del actual sistema de albergues, el cual por muchos años ya ha mostrado sus limitaciones y deficiencias. Tampoco sabemos cuál es la propuesta para atender a las familias con niños, que también siguen llegando cada día. La alcaldía ha dicho que también serán recibidas en otros establecimientos de apoyo temporal pero no ha dado más detalles.

5) La ciudad está ofreciendo una solución temporal, una carpa, para enfrentar una situación que necesita soluciones permanentes. Los migrantes que están llegando tienen todo el derecho a solicitar asilo político, y sus casos de asilo no serán resueltos en dos meses, ni en tres ni en seis. Es probable que estos tomen años, como ocurre con los cientos, sino miles, de casos de asilo que se encuentran pendientes en las cortes de Nueva York. Por otro lado, el gobernador Abbott no dejará de enviar buses, y sus aliados en Arizona y Florida ya han comenzado a hacer lo mismo.

Con un gasto de 34 millones de dólares, nos preguntamos, ¿por qué no proponer y desarrollar un plan duradero que atienda el problema de la pobreza y la falta de vivienda para la gente desamparada de la ciudad a la par de la situación de las personas migrantes? ¿Por qué no convertir más edificios deshabitados en alojamiento para gente sin vivienda? Esto atendería un problema estructural, no solo para las personas migrantes, sino para todas las personas sin vivienda. Hay hoteles en venta y edificios nuevos sin inquilinos. Nos preguntamos por qué destinar 34 millones de dólares a un plan que es peligroso, temporal, inhumano y definitivamente poco eficiente e inadecuado para resolver el problema del alojamiento de modo digno. ¿Por qué no invertir en opciones de largo plazo que permitan a las personas puedan preparar su propia comida, tener acceso a transporte, y movilidad para conseguir y mantener empleos?

Organizaciones como Coalition For the Homeless, Legal Aid Society, y otras, ya han declarado que probablemente este plan transitorio, esta curita o band-aid, no sea legal porque no va a poder cumplir con la ley del derecho a hospedaje, conocida como la "Right to Shelter Law" que rige a la Ciudad de Nueva York. Levantar carpas aisladas en una zona de inundación no es una solución segura ni adecuada. No cabe duda que \$34 millones pueden ser utilizados de otra forma más adecuada para alojar a neoyorquinos sin vivienda estable, tanto las y los que llegan recientemente como a las y los que llevan años aquí con necesidad de alojamiento digno, estable y de bajo costo.

Se tiene que expandir el programa de Sección 8 y la ayuda de emergencia de alquileres porque Nueva York no solo tiene una crisis de migrantes, también tiene una crisis de acceso a alojamiento, y estas nos parecen crisis manufacturadas. No tiene sentido gastar millones en algo que será temporal, aislado de los recursos y del transporte, y que será peligroso e inhumano.

Ya muchos residentes de City Island, la comunidad aledaña a Orchard Beach, están demandando una mayor presencia de la policía en el lugar “para controlar a los migrantes”. Por ejemplo, Bill Stanton, presidente del City Island Civic Association, una entidad que influencia la política local, ha dicho que la policía debe mantener el control de los movimientos de todo migrante que sea asignado a estos campamentos. Así, lo que se está sugiriendo es hacer que estos refugios sean en realidad campos de detención donde los migrantes no tendrán el derecho de moverse libremente. En efecto, se van a erigir campos de detención al aire libre. Si la historia y las experiencias de los campos de refugiados que actualmente existen alrededor del mundo nos han enseñado algo, es que cualquier “campamento” de este estilo en donde la gente es recluida y aislada debido a su identidad o procedencia, ha tenido consecuencias crueles y fatales.

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Rev. Micah Bucey, Judson Memorial Church
September 29, 2022

English

If New York City is to truly call itself a sanctuary city, all New Yorkers must loudly reject the dehumanizing and dangerous erection of inadequate tents for displaced migrants and the horrific realities of the city’s current shelter system. My faith demands that I stand with the human beings at the center of these continuing crises and call out the continuing failures of our city’s elected officials. We cannot call ourselves a sanctuary without embodying its call every day.

Spanish

Take Back the Bronx
September 28, 2022

English

This is stolen Black and Indigenous land that we are all standing on and there's plenty of space for migrants and local residents to both live and flourish. It's a shame that we live in one of the richest countries and the richest city and yet our elected officials claim that the best they can do is put migrants in tents and homeless people in shelters. There's new luxury buildings that most working class and poor people can't afford to live in being built everyday in this city and yet they remain empty while people are left to fend for themselves on the streets. Whether people are from this city, country or abroad everyone has a human right to housing and the necessary resources to survive. The only people that deserve our anger are our oppressors that are in elected offices, the landlords that hoard property and neglect the homes we live in and until we die in them and those that wear badges to abuse us. We as Take Back The Bronx stand in solidarity with ALL oppressed and displaced people home and abroad.

Spanish

Esta es una tierra negra e indígena robada en la que todos estamos parados y hay mucho espacio para que los inmigrantes y los residentes locales vivan y prosperen. Es una pena que vivamos en uno de los países más ricos y la ciudad más rica y, sin embargo, nuestros funcionarios electos afirman que lo mejor que pueden hacer es poner a los inmigrantes en tiendas de campaña y a las personas sin hogar en refugios. Hay nuevos edificios de lujo en los que la mayoría de la clase trabajadora y la gente pobre no pueden permitirse el lujo de vivir y se construyen todos los días en esta ciudad y, sin embargo, permanecen vacíos mientras la gente se las arregla para valerse por sí misma en las calles. Ya sea que las personas sean de esta ciudad, país o en el extranjero, todos tienen derecho humano a la vivienda y los recursos necesarios para sobrevivir. Las únicas personas que merecen nuestra ira son nuestros opresores que están en cargos electos, los propietarios que atesoran propiedades y descuidan las casas en las que vivimos y hasta que morimos en ellas y los que usan insignias para abusar de nosotros. Nosotros, como Take Back The Bronx, nos solidarizamos con TODAS las personas oprimidas y desplazadas dentro y fuera del país.

Fr. Luis Barrios, Holyrood Church
September 29, 2022

English

A sanctuary city is created through acceptance, respect, and celebration. Creating sanctuary cities is one way we can practice heaven on earth. Though I have not yet experienced this in New York City, and while I do not see the Mayor's Office as having the motivation at this moment, the good news is that at least we know they have the capacity. I'm not giving up, which is why I take part in community efforts to build this awakening.

Spanish

Una ciudad santuaria se crea a través de la aceptación, el respeto y la celebración. Crear ciudades santuario es una forma de practicar el cielo en la tierra. Aunque todavía no he experimentado esto en la Ciudad de Nueva York, y aunque no veo que la Oficina del Alcalde tenga la motivación en este momento, la buena noticia es que al menos sabemos que tienen la capacidad. No me doy por vencido, por eso participo en los esfuerzos de la comunidad para construir este despertar.

Rev. Schuyler Vogel, Fourth Universalist Society in the City of New York
September 29, 2022

English

We need more than half baked solutions like tent cities to solve this crisis. Are we actually a sanctuary city? Or just a place that talked a good game to score political points when the going was easy? Do we really want everyone to feel welcome here, every child to eat well, every person to have medical care, or will we make excuses about feasibility and cost as if we aren't one of the wealthiest cities in the world? I urge our leaders to think deeply about their values and their duty to serve the people of this city. I urge them to lead so that we may be impressed by their vision and inspired by their political courage, rather than disappointed by the smallness of their ideas and the cruelty of their solutions.

Spanish

Necesitamos más de soluciones a medias como tiendas de campaña para resolver esta crisis. ¿Somos realmente una ciudad santuario? ¿O simplemente un lugar que hablaba un buen juego para ganar puntos políticos cuando las cosas eran fáciles? ¿Realmente queremos que todos se sientan bienvenidos aquí, que todos los niños coman bien, que todas las personas reciban atención médica, o pondremos excusas sobre la viabilidad y el costo como si no fuéramos una de las ciudades más ricas del mundo? Insto a nuestros líderes a reflexionar profundamente sobre sus valores y su deber de servir a la gente de esta ciudad. Los insto a liderar para que podamos estar impresionados por su visión e inspirados por su valentía política, en lugar de decepcionados por la pequeñez de sus ideas y la crueldad de sus soluciones.

Rev. Lea Matthews, St. Paul & St. Andrew United Methodist Church
September 29, 2022

English

It is not only a clear violation of the right-to-shelter law to offer a tent city's accommodation to our arriving asylum-seekers, it is an ethical affront to human beings who have journeyed to a place purported to be a sanctuary city. These persons, like all of the unhoused among our city, are deserving and worthy of a safe place to live. It should not be forgotten that these migrants have been cruelly and chaotically bused here, after months of journeying to flee violence and unlivable circumstances. The last thing they need is to be met with more trauma and dislocation. The city can and must do better.

Spanish

No solo es una clara violación de la ley del derecho a la vivienda ofrecer alojamiento en una ciudad de tiendas de campaña a nuestros solicitantes de asilo que llegan, es una afrenta ética a los seres humanos que han viajado a un lugar que se supone que es una ciudad santuario. Estas personas, como todas las personas sin hogar de nuestra ciudad, merecen y merecen un lugar seguro para vivir. No debe olvidarse que estos migrantes han sido cruel y caóticamente transportados en autobús aquí, después de meses de viaje para huir de la violencia y circunstancias insoportables. Lo último que necesitan es encontrarse con más trauma y dislocación. La ciudad puede y debe hacerlo mejor.

Rabbi Barat Ellman, Brooklyn

English

If New York City is to truly call itself a sanctuary city, all New Yorkers must loudly reject the dehumanizing and dangerous erection of inadequate tents for displaced migrants and the horrific realities of the city's current shelter system. The current administration inherited New York City's abysmal response to homelessness, but his own response to the living conditions of the marginalized in our city reflect a degree of callousness that is carried through in Mayor Adams response to the displaced migrants and asylum seekers.

The Hebrew Bible repeatedly tells us to love and care for the stranger, and to treat the stranger as we would a native citizen (Exod 12:49; Lev 24:22; Num 15:14; Deut 10:19). We cannot stand by as migrants – who have endured an arduous and heartbreaking journey – to be housed in a large tent, in a flood zone, far from public transport, and without adequate provisions for privacy, family unity, and dignity. There must be alternatives (vacant hotel rooms, for instance) that are more fitting for a city that prides itself on sanctuary. We cannot call ourselves a sanctuary without embodying its call every day.

Spanish

Si la ciudad de Nueva York realmente se llama a sí misma una ciudad santuario, todos los neoyorquinos deben rechazar en voz alta la construcción deshumanizante y peligrosa de tiendas de campaña inadecuadas para los migrantes desplazados y las horribles realidades del actual sistema de refugios de la ciudad. La administración actual heredó la pésima respuesta de la ciudad de Nueva York a la falta de vivienda, pero su propia respuesta a las condiciones de vida de los marginados en nuestra ciudad refleja un grado de insensibilidad que se manifiesta en la respuesta del alcalde Adams a los migrantes desplazados y solicitantes de asilo.

La Biblia hebrea nos dice repetidamente que amemos y cuidemos al extranjero, y que lo tratemos como lo haríamos con un ciudadano nativo (Éxodo 12:49; Lev 24:22; Números 15:14; Deuteronomio 10:19). No podemos quedarnos de brazos cruzados como migrantes, que han soportado un viaje arduo y desgarrador, para ser alojados en una gran carpa, en una zona inundable, lejos del transporte público y sin las disposiciones adecuadas para la privacidad, la unidad familiar y la dignidad. Debe haber alternativas (habitaciones de hotel vacías, por ejemplo) que sean más adecuadas para una ciudad que se enorgullece de ser un santuario. No podemos llamarnos santuario sin encarnar cada día su llamado.

Meryl Ranzer, Respond Crisis Translation

English

Language violence is pervasive in the United States. The immigration, health, education, social services, and other systems that are equally life-critical are impossible for immigrants to navigate without language support, which is rarely provided. New York City claims to be a sanctuary city, and yet, offers very little in the way of qualified trauma informed translation and interpretation services.

Many migrants who have come to NYC experience financial, physical and emotional harm as a

result of institutionalized language violence in city shelters and in immigration court.

Too many asylum seekers, refugees, deportees, and other migrants experience financial, physical and emotional harm as a result of institutionalized language violence. The mass tent encampment the NYC Mayor's office is building on Orchard Beach is inhumane, cruel, and will not be able to meet the language needs of the migrants that will be imprisoned there.

We demand qualified interpreters and translators for migrants in shelters, in healthcare, and in the courtrooms.

The U.S. government weaponizes language intentionally to justify detention and deportation, NYC MUST do better.

Spanish

La violencia del lenguaje es generalizada en los Estados Unidos. Los inmigrantes, la salud, la educación, los servicios sociales y otros sistemas que son igualmente críticos para la vida son imposibles de navegar sin apoyo lingüístico, que rara vez se proporciona. La ciudad de Nueva York afirma ser una ciudad santuario y, sin embargo, ofrece muy pocos servicios calificados de traducción e interpretación informados sobre el trauma.

Muchos inmigrantes que han venido a la ciudad de Nueva York experimentan daños financieros, físicos y emocionales como resultado de la violencia lingüística institucionalizada en los refugios de la ciudad y en los tribunales de inmigración.

Demasiados solicitantes de asilo, refugiados, deportados y otros migrantes experimentan daños financieros, físicos y emocionales como resultado de la violencia lingüística institucionalizada. El campamento masivo de tiendas de campaña que la oficina del alcalde de Nueva York está construyendo en Orchard Beach es inhumano, cruel y no podrá satisfacer las necesidades lingüísticas de los migrantes que serán encarcelados allí.

Exigimos intérpretes y traductores calificados para los migrantes en los albergues, en la atención médica y en los juzgados.

El gobierno de los EE. UU. usa el lenguaje como arma intencionalmente para justificar la detención y la deportación, NYC DEBE hacerlo mejor.

TRINITY CHURCH WALL STREET

Trinity Church Testimony - Committee on Immigration

Friday, September 30th, 2022 | **Subject:** Oversight - Resources and Services for Newly Arrived Asylum Seekers

Chair Hanif and Members of the Immigration Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for this important hearing. My name is Natasha Lifton and I am the Director of Government Relations at Trinity Church Wall Street. In this testimony, I outline some of the steps Trinity Church is taking to support newly arrived migrants, as well as recommendations for what our city's leaders can do to ensure that the needs of these migrants, and those of the tens of thousands of homeless New Yorkers already in the shelter system, are being met.

Trinity Church Wall Street is an Episcopal Church in Lower Manhattan with a congregation of around 1,600 parishioners who represent all five boroughs and form an ethnically, racially, and economically diverse congregation. In addition to our ministry, we carry out our mission of faith and social justice through direct services, advocacy, and grantmaking.

As you are well aware, more than 13,000 people seeking asylum, including large numbers of children, have come to New York City in recent months, primarily from Texas. After harrowing journeys, primarily from Venezuela, they have endured 1700-mile-long bus rides without adequate food, water, and other basic necessities. We also have heard that asylum seekers are coming to New York City from Haiti and African countries, adding to the challenge of meeting diverse needs.

Guided by the teachings of our faith, Trinity Church has a steadfast commitment to welcoming immigrants to our city. As such, we recently provided funding to the New York Immigration Coalition, United Way of New York City, and Acacia Network Housing to support the critical work these organizations are doing on the ground to help newly arrived asylum seekers access shelter, health care, education, and other critical services. And, through our Neighborhood Support Initiative, we have distributed over \$500,000 in supplies such as clothing, feminine hygiene products, and toys to community-based organizations directly serving these families and individuals. We know many other philanthropic and nonprofit organizations are contributing as well.

TRINITY CHURCH

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While New York City's government leaders and nonprofit providers are working hard to address the needs of these newest New Yorkers, this unprecedented crisis is pushing New York City's already overburdened shelter system to the breaking point. As more asylum seekers arrive in the coming months, we urge the Administration and the Council to undertake the following policy and funding initiatives. These recommendations are informed by providers working on the front lines of the crisis and, taken together, will help ensure that the needs of migrants are met, while alleviating the strain on the shelter system.

1. Housing - Enact policies to help individuals more quickly access housing and reduce the shelter population:

- a. Lift the "90-day rule" and ensure providers receive clear, consistent guidance about the lifting of the rule so recipients of CityFHEPS vouchers can leave shelter and find permanent housing faster.
- b. Make the Fair Chance for Housing bill law so individuals with criminal records (and their families) living in shelters can find housing.
- c. Urge the Governor and State Legislature to create and fund the Housing Assistance Voucher Program, which would provide housing assistance to those ineligible for other housing programs.

2. Legal and Social Services - Expand legal and other supports for asylum-seekers:

- a. Immediately release the \$6.7 million allocated in New York City's FY23 budget to increase interpretation and translation services through the creation of language cooperatives and a citywide interpreter bank.
- b. Allocate \$10 million to fund emergency immigration legal services.
- c. Provide an additional \$10 million to community-based organizations for culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate wrap-around services, in and out of shelters, using trauma-informed approaches.
- d. Create and fund an initiative—in partnership with New York City social work schools—to enable service providers, including small community-based organizations, to hire, train and retain social workers.

3. Education - Meet the educational and emotional needs of newly arrived migrant children:

- a. Invest \$4 million to expand the successful Linking Immigrant Families with Early Childhood Education Project to help immigrant families enroll their children in PreK.
- b. Provide schools with funding to hire and retain additional school counselors, social workers, and English as a New Language teachers.
- c. Ensure the DOE places newcomer youth in schools with staff best equipped to meet their needs such as those that have bilingual mental health supports, English as a New

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- d. Language teachers, and ability to connect them to immigrant-serving community organizations, prioritizing schools in their new neighborhoods.
- e. Call on the State to claim the Public Education Exemption under the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant for all state-funded applicable early care and education programs to guarantee access for all children, regardless of citizenship status.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Rethink Food

**The New York City Council
Resources and Services for Newly Arrived Asylum Seekers
Oversight Hearing
Friday September 30th, 2022 – 1 P.M.**

TO: The Committee on Immigration, The Office of Emergency Management and The Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

FROM: Kathleen DiPerna, Rethink Food NYC, Inc.

DATE: Monday October 3rd, 2022

Good Afternoon Chair Hanif, Immigration Committee Members, Commissioner Castro and Commissioner Iscol,

Thank you to Chair Hanif and the Immigration Committee Members for convening this necessary oversight hearing on the support needed for the asylum seekers arriving in New York City, and for the opportunity to submit written testimony today on behalf of Rethink Food. We are a New York City-based nonprofit with the mission to create a more sustainable and equitable food system - one where every New Yorker has access to dignified, culturally responsive, and nutritious food.

My name is Kathleen DiPerna, and I am the Director of Government Relations for the organization. Rethink Food operates its programming in 35 council districts across all 5 boroughs providing nearly 40,000 meals per week to individuals seeking access to prepared meals. I come to you today to advocate to ensure that our new neighbors who are arriving in this city seeking asylum have the same access to food, and the food our organization provides.

In partnership with Team TLC NYC/Grannies Respond and the consortium of other volunteers, nonprofit and mutual aid organizations that have been organized, Rethink has provided 2,695 meals to both asylum seekers at Port Authority and the Megabus terminal in Manhattan, and at a construction job training program for asylum seekers via the Andromeda Community Initiative in Queens. These meals and efforts of the collective groups have been carried out without funding support from the City of New York.

For background, Rethink was founded in 2017, and started with a commissary kitchen, with the goal of transforming excess food from restaurants, corporate kitchens, and grocery stores into healthy meals that are provided – at no cost – to communities in need. The kitchen prepares an average of 8,000 meals per week, which are distributed to 8 CBOs in Queens, Brooklyn and Manhattan, and last year, recovered nearly 500K pounds of excess food.

At the height of the pandemic, Rethink leveraged its experience to address the dual challenges of escalating food insecurity rates and restaurants facing widespread closures, to launch Rethink Certified. Through this program, we partner with local restaurants to prepare delicious, culturally responsive meals that are provided free of charge to CBO's. In exchange, Rethink provides small grants to offset food, operating, and staffing costs. In 2021, we delivered nearly 3.3M meals to 88 CBOs and invested more

Rethink Food

than \$15M dollars into 76 restaurants, three quarters of which were minority- and/or women-owned.

Since the end of August, Rethink has been utilizing our restaurant network to be one of the food providers at Port Authority and other locations across the City, but we are at a point where we can no longer continue without government funded support. We are committed to providing meals to our network of community based organizations via long term partnerships that we have budgeted for throughout the fiscal year, and we want to help our new neighbors, but cannot continue without financial support from the City.

We are not the only organization that needs the support from New York City – there are organizations focusing on legal aid, transportation assistance, housing access, healthcare access, job training and many other necessary services our new neighbors need in order to survive. We urge you to look at the system that has already been built by these organizations and support the community-led work.

Looking ahead, we must ensure that our new neighbors have access to food and to the other services necessary for them to live in this City. We want to work with the City, The Mayor, The New York City Council, The Office of Emergency Management, The Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, The Department of Homeless Services and any other City agency called on to respond to this crisis to ensure that the asylum seekers have access to culturally relevant, nutritious food.

Thank you for reading our testimony and hearing our requests, and we look forward to discussing how in partnership, we can work together to feed our new neighbors.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathleen DiPerna

New York City Council - Committee on Immigration
Hearing September 30, 2022, 1:00 pm
Testimony of Ilze C. Thielmann,
Director of Team TLC NYC

This testimony provides the history behind current operations at the Port Authority Bus Terminal ("PABT"), the evolution of those operations, and the current challenges we are facing on the ground at PABT. It also expresses concerns beyond those already expressed by other critics of the mayor's plan to build tent cities to house asylum seekers ("AS"). My concerns arise from what I have personally witnessed with respect to how city employees approach the task at hand and treat AS on the ground.

Since the first bus arrived from Texas on August 5, 2022, the organization I head, Team TLC NYC, has spearheaded the response on the ground – greeting, assisting, reuniting, and transporting migrant families seeking asylum and arriving here from Texas and Washington, D.C. On August 2, I received notice of the impending arrival of the first bus from Texas, through Team TLC's nationwide network of volunteers and other organizations. When we realized that this was just the beginning of an influx that would be far more than we have ever experienced before, we contacted the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) and asked for their assistance. We were told the city would provide no funding, no Metrocards, no food vouchers, no transport – nothing – for that first bus arrival. The only assistance that was provided was a single volunteer.

With the assistance of other Community Based Organizations ("CBOs"), Team TLC greeted and assisted 54 migrants that day with no assistance from any governmental body or agency, save for the sole volunteer sent by MOIA. In fact, we were kicked out of the Port Authority Bus Terminal ("PABT") by Port Authority ("PA") Police because our group of 63 people was blocking foot traffic. We were then even chased away from the sidewalk in front of PABT for the same reason. So we processed, fed, clothed, medically triaged, and otherwise assisted the AS on the sidewalk across the street from PABT. We escorted a 12-year-old girl with diabetes to the hospital because she had been without insulin for four days. We transported AS to shelters and helped them navigate the byzantine shelter system that was not designed for this population. We bought bus tickets and sent AS to other cities to be reunited with their families.

When the press got wind of the fact that the city had done nothing to help the arriving AS, the mayor claimed that the city had received no notice that the bus was on its way. That was false. I personally had notified MOIA that the bus was coming, and as previously noted, they did nothing.

When the next bus arrived two days later, MOIA and the mayor were at PABT to greet them. The city had arranged with PA to have space cordoned off within the PABT, and for tables and chairs to be provided. The mayor insisted on being photographed handing out meals to AS – meals that had been provided by CBOs, not the city. The mayor insisted on having AS come over to meet him and shake hands with him, after a 36 hour bus ride and a traumatizing journey from their home countries to Texas. The mayor's staff physically pushed and pulled volunteers out of the way to facilitate those photo ops.

Eventually and gradually, Team TLC and its partners, Adama Bah and Artists Athletes Activists (together, the "Partners"), developed a decent working relationship with MOIA, and with the extraordinary support and assistance of PA, things went rather smoothly at PABT for some time. MOIA worked closely and cooperatively with the Partners, and supported rather than hampering their humanitarian mission. Unfortunately, all that has changed since the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit ("PEU") and the New York City Emergency Management ("NYCEM") took over, as will be described.

The Partners provide food (sometimes donated by additional CBOs and sometimes purchased by Team TLC and/or its volunteers), clothing, and transport for AS to join their families, whether here in New York or in other cities. The Partners interview each AS to make sure we know what they need and where they should go. For example, some AS have family here in New York or close by, and we work hard to reunite them with their families so that they will not have to enter the NYC shelter system, which is an absolute disaster. Some AS have family in other cities, and Team TLC spends its own money, without any public funding whatsoever, to send AS to those other cities to be reunited with family. Sometimes we arrange for family members who are already in the NYC shelter system to meet AS at Port Authority so that they can be reunited with family and sent to the same shelter together. And sometimes we have to make special arrangements for an AS – for example, if they are expecting family members to arrive at a later date, or if they are in the LGBTQ+ community and are afraid to enter the general population of the shelter system. Under such circumstances, we will send an AS to stay with a volunteer until such alternative arrangements can be made. When Team TLC runs out of funds, as happens often, I personally extend credit to the organization by paying for tickets and Ubers with my own credit card and reimbursing volunteers for food, transport, and other expenditures from my own bank account. Volunteers often buy tickets, food, and other things for AS without seeking reimbursement. Team TLC is thus desperate for funding. The city and state have provided none.

Despite the problems with funding, operations at PABT were rather successful, as many families were reunited every day through the efforts of the Partners. But when PEU replaced MOIA at PA, things turned sour.

PEU appears to have a single mission – to get the AS on buses to shelters as quickly as possible. Members of PEU directly interfere with the Partners' mission, lining AS up for buses to the shelters before the Partners have even had a chance to interview, feed, clothe, or make arrangements for those AS who should *not* be going to the shelters. Almost every day, the Partners have to retrieve AS from the bus lineup for the shelters who should *not* be going to the shelters, either because they are awaiting family members, being reticketed to other cities, or are awaiting other arrangements. Further, PEU places a great deal of pressure on AS awaiting family members, telling them that they have just *one hour* to be retrieved by their family members before they will be sent to the shelters. This just adds to the anxiety and trauma of these human beings who have already been through so much. They cannot control when their families are able to come meet them, and yet they are being harassed by PEU employees and pushed to get out or get on line for the shelters. There is no reason for this rush-job. The Port Authority has placed no time limit on our operation. Instead, PA has only required that a single city employee be present until the last AS leaves, so that the CBOs are not left holding the bag if there is an emergency with one of the AS. PEU simply wants to get out of there as soon as possible, and tries to blame it on PA.

Moreover, the way PEU treats AS is a travesty. I have personally witnessed PEU employees yelling at AS, arguing with them, bossing them around unnecessarily, and making them cry. That employees of a supposed sanctuary city would treat refugees in this manner is despicable. Last week, an AS came to me in tears because he had been told by a PEU employee that he could not be sent to Chicago to be reunited with his wife. When I approached that PEU employee, he started arguing with the weeping AS, saying that he had never told him that. The PEU employee claimed to have told the AS that the *city* would not be sending him to Chicago, and further stated that the AS had stormed away before the PEU employee could clarify that Team TLC would send him. When I cautioned the PEU employee that he shouldn't argue with a traumatized individual like an AS, but instead should treat AS with kindness and gentleness, the PEU employee snapped at me that he does not work for me, and that he doesn't have to do what I tell him. I was shocked. I said something to the effect of: "I know you don't work for me, but I thought we were on the same team and all wanted to help these asylum seekers." The PEU employee said that we are on the same team but he doesn't have to follow my instructions.

That same PEU employee yelled at one of my volunteers on Saturday, October 1, because she allowed an AS who had arrived the day before to return to the welcoming area at PABT to receive clothing and medical care.

The AS had spent the night at a shelter with little food and no warm clothing, and was feeling unwell. As we are a humanitarian organization, this Team TLC volunteer admitted the AS, provided her and her husband with food and clothing (which the city did *not* pay for) and brought her over to the medical area for triage. The PEU employee objected and said that she could not obtain medical care if she did not arrive on one of that day's buses. Power Malu of Artists Athletes Activists intervened and said that in an emergency, medical care should be given. After some argument between Malu and the PEU employee, the AS finally received medical care against the wishes of the PEU employee. I find it very difficult to continue working with people who would deny medical care or basic human necessities to another human being based on when they arrived at PABT. Especially since those necessities are being provided by CBOs.

It seems that some of the PEU staff are ill-suited to the kind of work that needs to be done at PABT. There appears to be a lack of empathy and kindness. One PEU employee who was particularly egregious in his treatment of AS and volunteers alike has already been reassigned because of his inappropriate behavior. But there are others in that unit still working at PABT who should not be working with such a vulnerable population.

Even more ill-suited for the work we do with AS is one of the consultants hired by NYCEM. The individual in question has twice accused people working with the Partners of human trafficking, going so far as to involve PA Police in his unfounded accusations. The same consultant suggested that the Partners had done something improper by placing a box of blankets donated by the American Red Cross on a truck used to transport donations and supplies to and from PABT. I explained to the consultant that the box had been inadvertently left behind earlier in the week, and that the Partners had placed it on the bus, and then *returned the box of blankets*, so that they would not be removed from PABT by unauthorized personnel. This individual also complained to PA that the Partners had placed items in the city's storage room at PA. First of all, PA has told me personally that the storage room was to be shared between the city and the Partners, which the city has neglected to inform the Partners about; secondly, none of the Partners' supplies were in the room anyway. It was just one more thing that this individual tried to use against the Partners in an apparent attempt to discredit us with our host at PABT, the PA. Luckily, PA knows us and the work we do, and thus far this individual's efforts have been unsuccessful.

All of this raises concerns about how AS will be treated if the city goes through with its ill-conceived plan of opening tent camps for AS at Orchard Beach and other locations. Considering the shabby way in which AS are treated by city employees in the controlled environment of the PABT, where PABT is the final authority and the Partners are able to witness everything that happens, I shudder to think what will happen once city employees know they are on the city's "turf," hundreds of AS are left at the city's mercy, and the Partners are not able to observe everything city employees do.

The city's stated reason for opening the tent camps, that more time is supposedly needed to triage AS to determine where they should ultimately be sent, is false. We are able to triage most AS within minutes, and the cases that take longer are usually resolved within a few hours, with family meeting the AS, the AS being sent to family locally, or AS being sent to another city. The notion that, on the one hand, PEU has tried to place a *one hour* limit on how long an AS may be permitted to wait for family to retrieve them, and on the other hand the city claims it needs up to 96 hours to make those determinations and arrangements and therefore needs to build tent camps, reveals the disingenuousness of the city's stated reasoning. What the city needs to do is to repair the broken shelter system, fund the CBOs who are doing the hard work of helping and reuniting families, and stop interfering with the CBOs' mission.

I am happy to discuss this further with anyone wishing to discuss this. I am reachable at TeamTLCnyc@gmail.com, or at 646-326-7606. Thank you for your time in reading this.

September 30, 2022

Dear Councilmembers:

The DOE has enrolled 1,500+ new migrant children (and counting) in city public schools. These children and their families are fleeing violence and economic devastation in their home countries, and since being in NYC, many have had to navigate the shelter system crisis, further exacerbating their trauma. These children will be arriving to our schools that have recently been cut by millions. We need to restore the cuts in order to support our most vulnerable children. We need more, not less.

Thank you,

Jessica Luck

Parent, School District 2, City Council District 5

September 30, 2022

Dear Councilmembers,

I urge you to please help and convince your colleagues to restore the budget cuts to the DOE. Our most vulnerable children need the full services of the DOE. The 1500+ new migrant children the DOE have enrolled in city public schools will be arriving to our schools that have recently been cut by millions of dollars. These children and their families are fleeing violence and economic devastation in their home countries, and since being in NYC, many have had to navigate the shelter system crisis further adding to their trauma. These children need your help and support.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Joseph Castillo

Parent – School District 2, City Council District 5

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 9/30/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: SIYA HEGDE

Address: _____

I represent: THE BRONX DEFENDERS

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DEBRA BRESTI (WITH MARIO RUSSELL)

Address: (FOR Q+A)

I represent: CATHOLIC CHARITIES

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: POWER MAU

Address: 9 Bleecker Street

I represent: Artists Athletes Activists

Address: 9 Bleecker Street

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ADIANA BAH

Address: _____ Morris Ave

I represent: SELF

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Aracelis Lucero

Address: Commonwealth Ave Bronx NY 10473

I represent: Mass

Address: 2770 Third Ave, 15th fl Bronx NY 10455

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: David Miranda

Address: _____

I represent: Covenant House New York

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 1/30/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Camille MACKLER

Address: State St Albany NY 12207

I represent: Immigrant ARC

Address: 426 3rd St Brooklyn NY 11218

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 1/30/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Charisma Wite

Address: 44th St Brooklyn NY 11219

I represent: Neighbors Together

Address: 245 25th Street

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dmitri Danil Glinski

Address: _____

I represent: American Russian-speaking Association for Civil & Human Rights

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 9/30/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Vinny Romero Mendez

Address: _____

I represent: Mixteca Organization

Address: 243 23rd Street

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 9/30/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Scott Hufschers

Address: Greene Ave

I represent: Neighborhoods

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 9/30/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Murad Awawdeh

Address: W 33rd Street

I represent: _____

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Shannon McKinnon, Legal Director IJC

Address: 17 Battery Place, Suite 1234 NY, NY

I represent: Immigrant Justice Corps

Address: see above

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 9/30/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Josh Golden

Address: 199 Water St. NY NY 10038

I represent: Legal Aid Society / Coalition for

Address: as above homeless

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 9/30/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Eric Lee

Address: Troutman St. Ridgewood, NY 11385

I represent: Homeless Services United

Address: 446 W 33rd St, NY NY

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 9/30/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Molly Park

Address: 4 WTC

I represent: Department of Social Service

Address: 4 WTC

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nelissa Ramos, Senior Exec. Director

Address: _____

I represent: NYCDOE

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tom Long

Address: 50 Water

I represent: H+H

Address: 50 Water

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Zach Iscol

Address: 165 Cadman Plaza East

I represent: NYC Emergency Manager

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Manuel Castro

Address: _____ Ave _____

I represent: NYC Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

Address: 253 Broadway

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 9/30/2022

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rishi Sodhi, NYC DOHMH

Address: (Executive Director, Health Care Access &

I represent: Policy)

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 9/30/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Zach Iscol

Address: Commissioner

I represent: NYC Emergency Mgmt

Address: 165 Cadman Plaza BK

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 9/30/2022

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Commissioner manuel Castro

Address: _____

I represent: mayor's office of Immigrant

Address: Affairs

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 9/30/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jake Copper

Address: Deputy Commissioner

I represent: NYCEM

Address: 165 Cadman Plaza

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☒ in opposition

Date: 9/30/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Karim Walker

Address: 123 William St.

I represent: SNP @ Urban Justice Ctr.

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ilze Thielmann

Address: _____

I represent: Team TLC NYC - Assisting

Address: Asylum Seekers

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Pedro Perez

Address: _____

I represent: Self (Asylum Seeker)

Address: _____

Spoke w/ committee to
present 1st panel

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 9/30/2022

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Enely Paez on behalf of Frankie Miranda

Address: 55 exchange Place, Suite 501 NY NY 10009

I represent: Hispanic Federation

Address: same as above

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 9/30/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ariadna Phillips

Address: _____

I represent: Mutual Aid Collective

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Yajaira Saavedra

Address: 10454

I represent: LA MORADA / MUTUAL AID COLLECTIVE

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 9/30/2022

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Laura Marks

Address: _____

I represent: Women for Afghan Women

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MARIA RUSSEL (CATHOLIC CHARITIES)

Address: DEBRA PREST

I represent: _____

Address: _____

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