



Human Resources
Administration
Department of
Homeless Services

**Testimony of Steven Banks, Commissioner
Department of Social Services**

**Before the New York City Council Finance and General Welfare Committees
Oversight Hearing: Homeless Shelters
December 17, 2018**

Good afternoon Chairperson Levin and members of the General Welfare Committee. Thank you for inviting me to appear before you today to discuss the Department of Homeless Services shelter system, specifically the progress made over the past few years to transform the shelter system as we work to help New Yorkers experiencing homelessness get back on their feet with dignity.

My name is Steven Banks and I am the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Social Services (DSS). In this capacity I oversee the Human Resources Administration (HRA) and the Department of Homeless Services (DHS).

To begin, I would like to address the extremely troubling incident at one of our Brooklyn client locations which culminated in the arrest of an HRA client. What happened at the Human Resources Administration's DeKalb Center on Friday, December 7, 2018, was completely unacceptable and should never happen again in New York City. On behalf of our agency and our dedicated front-line staff in all five boroughs, I apologize to Jazmine Headley and her one-year-old son and to the people of the City of New York for the actions that were taken that day.

- As reflected in the NYPD body worn camera videos, there were multiple points at which this incident could have and should have been defused.
- Last Monday, I placed two HRA Peace Officers on modified duty with no client contact.
- Consistent with their collective bargaining agreement, on Friday I suspended these two officers without pay for the maximum period of time and DSS will file disciplinary charges against them that could result in termination.
- Going forward, unless there is an immediate safety threat, I am directing that HRA Peace Officers shall not request the intervention of the NYPD without first contacting the Center Director or Deputy Director or her/his designee to attempt to defuse the situation by addressing a client need.
- Within the next 90 days, DSS will conduct retraining sessions for all HRA Peace Officers, with an emphasis on techniques for deescalating disputes in HRA Centers. Thereafter, this enhanced training will be a mandatory annual requirement for each officer.

- I intend to attend each of these retraining sessions to speak to the HRA Peace Officers regarding the importance of deescalating disputes.
- DSS has directed the City's contracted security services vendor to provide retraining sessions for all security guards assigned to HRA Centers, with an emphasis on techniques for deescalating disputes in HRA Centers. Thereafter, this training will be a mandatory annual requirement for any contracted security officer assigned to an HRA office.
- In addition to existing DSS customer service staff training, DSS has requested and received an OMB funding commitment to develop implicit bias training for all 17,000 DSS staff members to promote diversity in the workplace and dignity-centered client services.
- Building on its reforms through which 85% of SNAP/food stamps applications and recertifications are submitted online without the need for clients to come into an HRA Center, HRA will continue to move forward with expanding online access for cash assistance clients, subject to any necessary State approvals.
- Together with the NYPD Commissioner, we will take the following actions:
 - The NYPD and DSS will develop a protocol for determining appropriate instances in which HRA Peace Officers in HRA Centers should seek the assistance of the NYPD.
 - The NYPD and DSS will develop a protocol to deploy an NYPD supervisor to be part of the NYPD response team for such HRA assistance requests.
 - The NYPD and DSS will develop a protocol for transferring control of an incident to the NYPD when the NYPD arrives at an HRA Center.

A System Built Up Over Time

I would like to begin my testimony today by briefly providing some historical context of the shelter system that built up haphazardly over the past four decades. From 1994 to 2014, the shelter population in NYC increased 115 percent. And between 2011 and 2014, following the abrupt end to the Advantage rental assistance program, the DHS census increased by 38 percent. During this same time, New York City faced increasing economic inequality as a result of stagnant wages, a lack of affordable housing, and an increased cost of living – rents increased more than 18% while wages increased by less than 5% and 150,000 rent regulated apartments were lost. The resulting dramatic increase in the shelter population coupled with underinvestment created real challenges as DHS and the agency's not-for-profit partners worked to adequately ensure safe, clean, and secure conditions.

While we know there is much work to be done, the data shows that our strategies to address this crisis that has built up over 40 years are beginning to take hold:

- Prevention first – evictions by City Marshals are down by 27% since 2013 through our investments in tenant legal services and rent arrears payments.
- Addressing street homelessness – more than 2,000 individuals have come in off the street and remained off since we implemented HOME-STAT in 2016.
- Expanding social services rehousing initiatives – since 2014, more than 100,000 men, women and children have moved out of shelter or averted homelessness altogether through our new rental assistance and other rehousing programs.

- Transforming the approach to providing shelter and services – last year the DHS shelter census was flat year over year for the first time in a decade, and this year it is essentially flat again despite providing shelter to more than 500 Puerto Rican evacuees whom the Trump Administration abandoned. And we have reduced the DHS shelter footprint from 648 shelter sites reported in *Turning the Tide* to 464 today, and we have sited 29 new borough-based shelters, with 18 already operating.

With respect to shelter conditions specifically, the Administration has set out to address the cumulative impact of years of underinvestment in shelter maintenance, security, and client services. Following the 90-day review of homeless services in 2016, we developed and are currently implementing comprehensive reforms to transform the City’s approach to providing services and shelter to New Yorkers experiencing homelessness.

A Multifaceted Strategy: Immediate and Long-term Efforts

In order to address both the immediate and long-term needs of shelter infrastructure and to maximize our efforts as we help homeless families and individuals get back on their feet, we employed a multifaceted approach through which we engaged in rapid-response efforts to immediately address and improve conditions in shelters, while simultaneously working to raise the bar and strengthen the agency from top to bottom.

Since the 90-day review in 2016, the Administration has reduced building violations and is working to create a safe and dignified physical environment in shelter. We are making progress towards this goal by:

- Committing to get out of 360 cluster sites and commercial hotel locations, with a priority to exit cluster sites with the worst physical infrastructure.
 - Since January 2016, the City has closed more than 1,800 cluster units, including transitioning roughly 300 units at a handful of cluster sites to operate as State-licensed Tier II non-profit shelters — representing a more than 50% reduction in the Cluster Site program citywide. The City was managing 3,658 cluster units on January 1, 2016. As of October 31, 2018, the City is utilizing fewer than 1,800 cluster units as shelter and continues closing cluster units at a rapid pace.
 - Earlier this month, we announced that the City is concluding an agreement for the acquisition and conversion of nearly 500 cluster units across 17 buildings into permanent affordable housing for over 1,000 New Yorkers in need, as part of this Administration’s broader initiative to address homelessness in New York City.
- Expanding the shelter repair squad, a multi-agency task force to inspect shelters and repair building code violations.
 - As a result of more comprehensive inspections, partnering with all four inspection agencies (DOB, HPD, FDNY, DOHMH) to undertake coordinated inspections of all shelter buildings, we have identified and remediated more violations than ever before. Over the

last three years, the City and shelter providers have addressed more than 25,000 violations.

- Since 2015, unremediated violations within DHS shelters have reduced by 86%.
- Building and instituting a system which allows the inspection agencies to efficiently track building code violations across all shelter buildings.
 - This system provides an expansive view of the shelter system as a whole and allows DHS to communicate meaningful data about shelter conditions and amenities, both internally and across city and state agencies.
- Developing and publishing the shelter repair scorecard: a monthly public report on all unremediated violations and conditions present within DHS shelter buildings.
- Significantly increasing investments in capital repairs and significantly increasing investments in our not-for-profit partners so that providers are more readily able to address issues in their buildings.
 - We have invested \$600 million over 10 years to expand capacity and improve physical conditions at family and adult shelters.

These efforts are part of DHS's overall strategy to raise the bar for shelter performance, strengthen the agency through effective policies, procedures, and data, and to expand and improve shelter capacity. With this framework in place, we and our partners are committed to delivering the best services possible for New Yorkers experiencing homelessness, so they can get back on their feet as quickly as possible.

Getting Out of Clusters

Last year, we announced *Turning the Tide*, the Mayor's plan to transform the City's approach to providing shelter. The plan puts people and communities first by ending the use of decades-old stopgap measures, like cluster shelter sites and commercial hotel rooms, and instead opening a smaller number of new borough-based shelters to help families and individuals stay connected to the anchors of life—such as schools, jobs, health care, families and houses of worship—as they get back on their feet.

The City's effort to get out of clusters is a key component to improving the lives of New Yorkers experiencing homeless, as 2015 data showed that approximately 70 percent of building violations were found at cluster sites. Moreover, we have prioritized closing the clusters with the worst violations to address the most pressing infrastructural issues. As I noted above, we have exited more than 50% of cluster units and we are on pace to end the use of cluster units as shelter by our end of 2021 deadline.

As part of the implementation of the *Turning the Tide* plan, the Administration is proceeding with an initiative to convert cluster shelter units to permanent housing, including through eminent domain if necessary, to help end the 18-year-old cluster program. As the first part of this effort, we announced earlier this month that the Administration is moving forward to finance the acquisition of 17 cluster buildings by trusted locally-based not-for-profit developers, who will rehabilitate the sites working with the City's Department of Housing and Preservation and Development (HPD) and create affordable housing for homeless families. The cluster buildings included in this first phase of conversion to

permanent housing will help nearly 500 families, including more than 1,000 people, experiencing homelessness secure permanent affordable housing. We expect to finalize this first phase in early 2019.

When these sites transition to not-for-profit ownership, the new not-for-profit owners will enter into a regulatory agreement with HPD to ensure the long-term affordability of the former cluster housing for homeless families and other low-income New Yorkers. At this point, homeless families residing at these locations eligible for rental assistance and prepared for housing permanency will be offered the opportunity to remain as tenants with a new rent-stabilized lease should they wish to remain in the building. Additionally, all non-cluster tenants living in a cluster building at the time of purchase will be able to remain in their apartments with rent-stabilized leases and additional protections under HPD's regulatory agreement.

This recent agreement is a testament to the potential for success in transitioning cluster sites into affordable permanent housing through a negotiated resolution. And we are working on additional conversions. If negotiations to finance the purchase of additional cluster buildings for permanent housing are not successful, the eminent domain tool remains on the table as an option to acquire additional locations.

Clearing Building Code Violations

Complementary to the plan of getting out of cluster sites are our efforts to ensure clients can safely access services in traditional shelters by identifying and mitigating building violations.

The Mayor established the Shelter Repair Squad as a multi-agency task force to inspect shelter buildings and repair building code violations. The task force is comprised of the Fire Department (FDNY), the Department of Buildings (DOB), the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) and the Department of Homeless Services (DHS). Each agency has assigned teams to the Shelter Repair Squad for both inspection and repair. And through this task force, skilled trades and inspection personnel are deployed to address violations and accelerate critical repairs at homeless shelters citywide.

At least two times per year, each agency will inspect facilities for code violations and inform providers of the results. Efforts are coordinated between agencies to maximize the efficiency of inspections, minimize duplication of efforts across teams and agencies, and reduce the burden of frequent inspections.

At DHS, we also conduct Routine Site Review Inspections (RSRIs) to identify both direct violations as well as conditions that may become problematic over time. RSRIs assist us in identifying and mitigating the most immediate safety hazards, while also providing an opportunity to conduct preventive maintenance and minimize the number of units placed off-line at a given time. During the RSRI, a DHS inspector is accompanied by the landlord, building manager, shelter director, head of maintenance, security, owner representative, caseworker, and/or other managerial staff. If any conditions are deemed hazardous or dangerous, the inspector immediately notifies those who are part of the walkthrough. Upon receiving an email of the RSRI results, the provider has 24 hours to address severe deficiencies in the building's

infrastructure. The RSRI report provides sufficient detail to help the providers develop and implement a remediation plan for the identified building conditions that require attention.

The Shelter Director also submits a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) to DHS, which informs next steps to address the conditions identified in the RSRI at the shelter. Multiple re-inspections are conducted throughout the process of completing a CAP, which occur prior to the next scheduled RSRI inspection.

In this way, when the inspectors perform the next RSRI, the action plan informs the walkthrough so that they can ensure all identified needs have been addressed. This inspection system allows city agencies to work with shelter providers to identify building issues, immediately address dangerous or hazardous conditions, prevent deeper infrastructural issues, and follow through to improve the conditions of each shelter.

The Shelter Repair Squad is a prime example of interagency collaboration to address longstanding issues across the shelter system. In the first year of this program, more than 12,000 building violations were corrected. And applying lessons learned from the first year, the administration announced in 2016 the rollout of the Shelter Repair Squad 2.0. As we have reported previously, the Shelter Repair Squad conducted more than 42,000 shelter inspections from 2015-2017, reducing violations that went unaddressed for many years by 86 percent. Today, many of the remaining repairs involve normal wear and tear, and capital projects which we are funding and will be discussed later in this testimony.

During the 90-day review in February of 2016, the City also established a shelter hotline to enable shelter residents to formally communicate issues about shelter conditions. This not only provides an empowering avenue through which shelter clients can become involved in improving shelter conditions, but it also helps us keep our ear to the ground and identify potential conditions that require attention.

Tracking Progress through the Shelter Repair Scorecard

Another critical component of the Shelter Repair Squad is the ability for the City to track all shelter building violations, along with measuring the progress made towards ameliorating the identified issues. To drive this task, the City developed a system to report on all city shelters and every violation attributed to each building. Essentially, this acts as a real time tracker for shelter building violations, allowing the City to appropriately allocate Shelter Repair Squad staff to work with providers to inspect buildings and develop and implement remediation plans. As a testament to the utility of this system, the framework has since been adopted by the State to develop their Shelter Management System (SMS), which allows our oversight agency to more efficiently monitor building systems by tracking the status, remediation, and lifecycle of deficiencies and their responses by providers and users.

Information is aggregated from various sources available to DHS to provide a central clearinghouse where users retrieve information about shelters or evaluate and track the status of repairs at shelters or information that informs intake decisions, including requests for reasonable accommodation. This approach facilitates interagency collaboration in improving conditions in shelters and makes it possible to formulate the monthly *Shelter Repair Scorecard*, which publicly reports on the conditions of homeless shelter facilities. The scorecard helps define the scope of any problems by publicly listing conditions at

all homeless shelters in New York City that do not meet applicable regulations and makes it possible to track progress in dealing with them.

The Shelter Repair Scorecard Contains:

- A summary page showing the total number of inspections conducted, any new problems found, and violations and other conditions resolved each month.
- A list of all shelter buildings, with summaries of the conditions in each building.
- A report card for each individual shelter with the number of each type of violation and progress in fixing them. This page will describe the type of shelter, the total number of units and the owner of the building.

Financing

On a parallel track to the efforts of the Shelter Repair Squad, we are doubling down in our short- and long-term determination to adequately fund our not-for-profit sector and provide our partners with efficient mechanisms so that they are able to deliver the services our homeless clients rely on as they get back on their feet.

As part of the *Turning the Tide* plan to reduce our footprint while meeting capacity needs, and improve physical conditions at family and adult shelters, \$600 million in capital funding was allocated in FY18 over 10 years to help achieve this goal. This builds on over \$52 million over four years in FY16 for 30 new capital projects at shelter facilities to address DHS shelter conditions and \$90 million added over 5 years in FY17 for building upgrades at facilities, including 61 new capital projects.

Our commitment to adequately fund our not-for-profit sector is further exemplified in the FY19 Executive Budget, in which we invested an unprecedented \$236 million to increase funding for providers to both maintain and repair the physical infrastructure of shelters and provide social services in shelters. This increase in funding is complementary to the additional \$163 million we spend annually for health and mental health services in shelter.

Overall, the FY19-22 September capital budget contains more than \$350 million for capital projects. DHS manages some of our projects in-house, and other generally larger projects are managed in partnership with the Department of Design and Construction (DDC).

As of this moment, we have 61 projects actively being designed and 24 projects are in construction. DHS and DDC have forty-five (45) projects in the planning stage preparing for design, all of which are planned to begin during this Fiscal Year.

Responding to Introductions

Proposed Int. No. 915

Int. No. 915 would amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring the department of homeless services and human resources administration to post shelter, supportive housing and cluster site data. DSS has already made a commitment to engage in efficient shelter

reporting, including items such as rental assistance placements, information regarding the census of shelter facilities, supportive housing placements, security, and model budget contracts. We look forward to working with the sponsors to address the intent of this bill through our reform initiatives and practices, including any modifications that would be helpful based on discussion with sponsors.

Proposed Int. No. 1110

Int. No. 1110 would amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to housing specialists within the human resources administration and department of homeless services. We agree that having professionals available to help individuals experiencing homelessness find permanent affordable housing is one of many important components needed to help individuals and families get back on their feet. Accordingly, we would like to work with the sponsors to craft legislation that is both effective and operationally feasible.

Proposed Int. No. 883

Int. No. 883 would amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring the department of homeless services to provide customer service training. DHS agrees that training staff is an important effort. We are already working to implement a comprehensive array of trainings for shelter staff and we look forward to working with the sponsors to align this bill with our reform initiatives that are in progress.

Proposed Intros No. 884, 1232, and 1233

These three proposed bills would amend the administrative code of the city of New York in relation to various components of shelter transfers. As part of the 90-day review, we identified reform of the shelter transfer process as a priority. DHS has drafted a transfer policy to reform the long-standing process. While we comply with current state shelter transfer regulations that have governed transfer policy, the State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), our oversight agency, has advised us that it is issuing additional regulations that would preempt any local procedures that we had planned to implement. State OTDA has advised us that these regulations will be issued this month. Upon the issuance of these State regulations, DHS will finalize an updated transfer policy. We would like to work with the sponsors to align the language in the proposed legislation with the OTDA requirements when they are promulgated.

Conclusion

Overall, the Administration has made comprehensive and concerted efforts to address years of underinvestment in the infrastructure of the shelter system with a combination of immediate investments alongside top-to-bottom organizational improvement reforms. We have taken substantial steps towards improving shelter system conditions by reducing the Giuliani-era cluster program by more than 50 percent. And with this month's announcement that nearly 500 cluster units will become permanent affordable housing in early 2019, we remain on pace to end the cluster program by 2021. Further, the City has stepped up its efforts to use data-informed strategies to identify and address

building code violations through the Shelter Repair Squad, including utilizing Shelter Repair Scorecard to track the City's progress towards improving the conditions in shelters. Our new systems, which allow a great deal of interagency collaboration, are complemented by the City's increase in funding that supports our historically underfunded non-profit-partners to conduct maintenance and repairs within their shelters.

There is still work to be done to address the decades of disinvestment in shelter infrastructure, and we remain committed to helping homeless families and individuals get back on their feet in a safe, secure, and clean environment.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify and I welcome your questions.

NYC Council
Committee on General Welfare
Submitted by Center for Urban Community Services (CUCS)
December 17, 2018

FOR THE RECORD

My name is Tony Hannigan, and I am the founder and CEO of the Center for Urban Community Services (CUCS). I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony to the General Welfare Committee on Intro. 915.

CUCS originally began in the early 1980's at Columbia University, and our organization is widely acknowledged to be a founder of the supportive housing model and leader in the development and advancement of progressive solutions to homelessness. Today, as an independently established non-profit, CUCS has more than 30 programs across the city, including: supportive services in more than 2,500 units of supportive housing; several shelters and transitional residences for mentally ill men and women; responsibility under contract to the NYC DHS for street homelessness and housing placement for all of Manhattan; and a DHS funded street medical services program in three boroughs. In addition, among other programs, CUCS provides professional staff training in NYC and nationally for 15,000 staff per year, including Crisis Intervention Training for the NYPD.

While CUCS believes it is fundamentally flawed to view homeless and formerly individuals and families as a segment of the NYC population to be apportioned, we are also concerned that Intro 915 conflates shelter and transitional services with permanent supportive housing. The former involves a population in transition and the latter does not. While many communities have an instinctual (though largely unfounded) resistance to "homeless shelters", categorizing permanent supportive housing with transitional and shelter services would only heighten and reinforce misconceptions.

The Mayor and the City Council introduced the 15/15 initiative which is underway and provides for the development of 15,000 supportive housing units. It would be counterproductive to introduce legislation that could hinder its progress, particularly when last year the Council requested acceleration of production of new supportive housing from 500 to 700 units per year. Organizations like CUCS that build supportive housing need the Council's moral and vocal support to help accomplish these goals. Intro 915, on the other hand, infers supportive housing is negative and something to be reported and contained. In fact, supportive housing is ending chronic homelessness, adding affordable housing to the community, improving property values, and creating jobs.

As a developer of supportive housing, CUCS knows full well about community opposition to supportive housing. It is often rooted in misinformation, stigma and fear. Having to report it only increases stigma for those who live there and others who may some day live there. Further, Intro. 915 could create a context for some community boards and council districts to declare a moratorium on supportive housing. Supportive housing developers already face this impediment in some communities.

Homeless and formerly homeless people are not dangerous, but they are the poorest among us. CUCS greatly respects the work and leadership of the General Welfare Committee and the NYC Council. However, we can not support Intro. 915. Thank you for your time and attention.

**Testimony to the
New York City Council
Committee on General Welfare
Submitted by ACMH, Inc.
December 17, 2018**

FOR THE RECORD

Good afternoon, Chair Levin and members of the Committee. My name is Daniel Johansson. I am the Chief Executive Officer of ACMH. On behalf of ACMH, thank you for the opportunity to testify before this Committee on Intro. 915.

ACMH is a not-for profit that for more than 40 years has developed, operated and provided supportive housing for persons with mental illness in New York City. We currently serve more than 1,500 individuals and families daily with affordable housing, supportive services and care coordination in Manhattan, Queens and the Bronx.

I do not believe that Intro 915 will advance the development of more supportive housing in NYC – housing that is permanent and affordable with on-site services. Supportive housing has proven to have a positive impact on neighborhoods: removing blight, improving security, offering employment and enhancing property values.

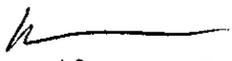
Though surely unintended, the posting of the number of supportive housing sites by council district and community board signals that supportive housing is bad for a community – it gives ammunition to the uninformed, misinformed, and fearful that supportive housing is something to be avoided, not encouraged.

As enlightened New Yorkers who care about reducing stigma and fighting for the underdog, why should we single out ~~for~~ housing that includes units for people who need and will get supportive services: the mentally ill, runaway youth, youth aging out of foster care or institutional settings, the homeless? We should be championing permanent housing with support, not calling it out.

I am more concerned frankly about the proliferation of housing that is unaffordable to most New Yorkers, let alone that doesn't include units tied to supportive services for the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

This bill will slow or stop supportive housing in districts that already have it and do nothing to promote it in districts that do not already have it.

For these reasons, we ask that you oppose Intro 915. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.


12-17-2018

**CITY OF NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
CITY COUNSEL LEGISLATION
T2018-3343 Oversight
Homeless Shelter Conditions
BILLS Int 883, Int 884, Int 915, Int 1110, Int 1232, & Int 1233
December 17, 2018 1:00 PM
TESTIMONY**

Dec. 10, 2018

Hello,

I am a resident of a homeless shelter for single men operated by a subcontractor operating under arrangements with New York City and the Department of Homeless Services.

I read recently that there had been some four murders in such shelters in the past several years. I also have heard from my current roommate that a resident of a shelter was recently subjected to rape or near-rape, and subsequently committed suicide.

I have been in at least one homeless shelter which (if I understand correctly) was specially designed to provide medical services to hard drug addicts but in which a kind of open-air drug market for cocaine and heroin was sometimes allowed to operate with impunity.

~Unsigned

**Testimony to the
New York City Council
Committee on General Welfare
Submitted by Housing and Services, Inc.
December 17, 2018**

Good afternoon, Chair Levin, and members of the Committee.

My name is Jim Dill and I am the Executive Director of Housing and Services, Inc. which I will abbreviate to "HSI". On behalf of the tenants, staff, Board and, I truly hope, future tenants of HSI, I am grateful for this opportunity to testify before this Committee on Int. No. 915.

HSI is a small not-for-profit operator of permanent supportive housing programs consisting of 516 congregate units in three Manhattan-based projects and a 100-unit scattered sites program in upper Manhattan and the Bronx. Our first supportive housing project went on line in 1988.

HSI completely concurs with all policy points, requests and suggestions in the testimony of the Supportive Housing Network of NY.

In this testimony HSI hopes to amplify certain points in The Network's testimony based upon the needs and welfare of our tenants and HSI's aspirations for our current and future tenants.

Our concerns about the possible unintended consequences of Int. No. 915 are two-fold:

- It may sow confusion by lumping together the problems of homelessness with the solution for homelessness
- It may stigmatize both our special needs tenants and community tenants.

As for the problem and solution: It is well-evidenced that permanent supportive housing is the long-term most humane and cost-effective solution to end chronic homelessness. Public opinion perceives street-homelessness and the shelter system as the problem. We believe it is counter-productive to the Council's laudable goals of expediting the production of permanent supportive housing that the proposed DSS reporting would include shelters, cluster sites and both single-site supportive housing facilities and scattered-site supportive housing units.

Much of the public perceives the shelters to be dangerous and potentially poorly controlled and clustered site housing to be poorly maintained. To the public, reporting on these is the "bad list". To include our permanent supportive housing and our tenants in such reports creates the implication that everything on the list is "bad" and to be feared and eliminated.

As permanent supportive housing providers, we see the shelter system as a short term "Band-Aid" immediately necessary but ultimately expensive and less humane. The more permanent supportive housing New Yorkers have, the less need there will be for shelters. We fear that the proposed DSS reporting will have the unintended double whammy of slowing down both the short term "Band-Aid" and long term solution to homelessness. By recent rule of thumb the annual cost of permanent supportive is generally \$10,000 less than other temporary "Band-Aid" fixes. The cost of slowing down permanent supportive housing production

includes both the unquantifiable human misery of New Yorkers languishing on the streets or over crowded shelter system and the millions of dollars on costly short-term fixes.

As for stigmatization: Our three Manhattan projects are HPD-regulated 60/40 special needs/low income community projects and firmly establish our special needs housing as a sub-set of affordable housing.

As for our special- needs tenants: We are deeply concerned that the proposed DSS reporting will have the unintended consequence of recasting the permanent solution to homelessness and our special-needs tenants' hard fought efforts to increase their housing stability, self-esteem, dignity, independence and health to just another continuation of their former homelessness.

Once special needs tenants are admitted into our projects they are no longer homeless. Our projects are long established and some of our special -needs tenants have thrived in our housing for more than twenty years. The proposed DSS reporting will continue to associate these long-term tenants and their housing units with their decades-past homelessness. We have to ask: "When does it end?" And "Will our tenants forever be defined by the rock-bottom period of their lives?"

As for our low-income community tenants: In 60/40 housing projects, special-needs tenant revenue streams help support building operating costs thereby making affordable low-income community rents possible.

We are concerned that the proposed DSS reporting for single-site supportive facilities will have the unintended consequence of attaching the stigma of homelessness to the 40% of our projects' tenants who are not required to be homeless. At our three Manhattan projects, these are our community tenants who face exposure to such stigmatization by project:

- In Manhattan CB 6-Up to 80 disabled veterans with military services ranging from Vietnam to Iraq.
- In Manhattan CB 9-Up to 36 predominantly African-American or Hispanic retired senior citizens
- In Manhattan CB 7-Up to 22 predominantly retired seniors who have resided in their neighborhood for over 23 years.

In summary:

Over all, for HSI there are many reasons to be optimistic about the production prospects for permanent supportive housing projects. Recent initiatives by both New York State and New York City have streamlined the complex and arduous packaging of project financing, social services and rent subsidies. We are very excited by recent changes in IRS regulations which now allow income averaging, enabling tenants with incomes up to 80% of AMI to be eligible for 60/40 housing. We are eagerly exploring avenues which will allow HSI to consider possible projects addressing not only the homeless crisis but also New York City's affordable housing crisis. We are thrilled to be presented with opportunities to envision projects with flexibility to meet specific communities' needs including, but not limited, to seniors and young families.

Like so many of our peer organizations, HSI is eager to meet New York's housing needs. Even with the streamlining, the challenges remain great and the barriers are large. At this time HSI believes that Int. No. 915 potentially creates another barrier to the production of supportive and affordable housing at the time when New Yorkers need fewer barriers to housing.

For all the reasons above, we oppose Int. No. 915.



**Samaritan
Daytop
Village**

WHERE GOOD LIVES™

718-206-2000

138-02 Queens Boulevard
Briarwood, NY 11435

samaritanvillage.org

**Testimony to the
New York City Council
Committee on General Welfare
Submitted by Samaritan Daytop Village
December 17, 2018**

Good afternoon, Chair Levin and members of the Committee. My name is Michelle DeMott and I am the Chief of Staff to Mitchell Netburn at Samaritan Daytop Village. On behalf of our organization, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before the Committee on Intro. 915.

Samaritan Daytop Village (SDV) has grown into one of New York's largest nationally-recognized comprehensive health and human services agencies with over 50 programs across 10 counties, including: New York City, Long Island, Westchester, and upstate and an operating budget of close to \$200 million dollars. We offer a rich array of programs including treatment for substance use disorder and behavioral health, transitional and supportive permanent housing, and innovative services for veterans, homeless individuals, women, children, youth, seniors and families.

Samaritan Daytop Village is one of the members of the over 200 non-profit operators of supportive housing represented by The Supportive Housing Network of New York. As you heard in the earlier testimony given by Laura Mascuch, there are thousands of vulnerable New Yorkers who rely on supportive housing. Additionally, there are tens of thousands more in our NYC shelters unable to find affordable housing, with extensive lengths of stay in those shelters, awaiting the availability of additional units of supportive permanent housing. There is an affordable housing crisis in NYC and we are appreciative of the City's commitment to create 15,000 new units of supportive housing over the next 15 years in NYC 15/15. We are even more appreciative of the Council's recognition of the need and its request to accelerate the production of supportive housing units.

As you are aware, Intro. 915 requires that the Department of Social Services (DSS) submit to every Council Member and community board, and post on its website, quarterly reports on the number of shelters, supportive housing units, including both single-site supportive housing and scattered-site units, and cluster sites. What the Council however may not be aware of is the unintended consequences of the bill. While we understand the need for transparency in government and the importance of tracking data, we believe that for practical purposes, it will in fact hinder the development of the very units the Council has requested to accelerate. The bill could be construed to support the premise that supportive housing is a negative, something to be reported on and contained.

What we have seen at Samaritan Daytop Village when siting our shelter locations has been community opposition, fear, increased stigma and NIMBY, over and over again based on misinformation. We've faced protests and community residents who have angrily stated that violence and drug use has gone up in their communities as a result of "the homeless." Residents have stated they feared for their elders and their children with the placements of shelters in their communities. The reporting required will likely result in these communities and council districts shutting their doors to additional residences; hindering the development of additionally needed housing.

Having operated supportive housing units, Samaritan Daytop Village has seen firsthand that it is in fact a positive asset to communities. Supportive housing accomplishes ending homelessness for many of the individuals we serve in shelter. Additionally, it has proven to increase property values, create jobs both during construction and permanently once the building is built, and creates affordable housing.

The Council has indicated its full support for the quick development of supportive housing in order to address NYC's affordable housing crisis. With that being said, the Council should avoid any measure that would hinder said development. As I stated earlier, community opposition in finding sites has traditionally been the most difficult part of the development process. Why make it unintentionally worse?

As a member of The Supportive Housing Network of NY, Samaritan Daytop Village supports their proposal to the Council to follow an alternative approach based on an effort put forth in Los Angeles, another city combating a similar homelessness crisis. In Los Angeles, the city committed to creating 10,000 new units of supportive housing, spread throughout the city. Each council member pledged to ensure a target number of units were developed in their district. This pledge made by the council members made supportive housing production an exciting goal to be achieved by both the politicians and the residents in a positive manner. Samaritan Daytop Village would support the Network in its efforts to assist the Council so that we can achieve our mutual goal of 15,000 units.

Formerly homeless individuals and families have faced adversity and stigma at every door. Supportive housing provides affordable housing for formerly homeless people with special needs. Why would we want to continue to reinforce the stigma? Supportive housing is not only effective for ending chronic homelessness, but it helps to maintain long term housing stability by providing on going supportive services.

I would respectfully ask, on behalf of Samaritan Daytop Village, that this Committee oppose Intro. 915. Allow us to continue to be on the front lines in partnership with you and your communities serving the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide this testimony.



SAFETY NET ACTIVISTS

Supported by the Safety Net Project at the Urban Justice Center

**CITY OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF HOMELESS SERVICES
CITY COUNSEL LEGISLATION
T2018-3343 Oversight
HOMELESS SHELTER CONDITIONS
BILLS Int 883, Int 884, Int 915, Int 1110, Int 1232, & Int 1233
DECEMBER 17, 2018 1:00 PM**

Council members and guests,

I am here to request that not only do you create and enact laws to reduce chaos that destabilizes people's ability to survive and adjust as necessary to demands within our economy to become as independent as possible, but to address the waste and fraud that harms those sheltered or unsheltered at a growing cost of \$2 Billion+ annually before counting state and federal funding.

My experience is an example in Street outreach. I was engaged at 23rd St./ FDR by Goddard Riverside MOC over a period of a month.

I was handed over to then Common Ground outreach team and was introduced to 2 veteran outreach workers before being finally assigned to a new case manager. I wrote my own psycho social and saw a psychiatrist with whom I shared overwhelming response to 9/11, 12/30 and other trauma suddenly manifesting. Although, I was asked to fill out Housing preference form once upon which the need for scatter-site housing with basic 4 rooms was clearly stated., 6 HRA 2010e applications without this information were filed without this appearing on the filed applications. Copies were later obtained from HRA PACT.

I called for case conference with director and housing specialist and was told that there was no scatter-site or HRA TBRA subsidy available over period of 2 years. Unbeknownst to me until things had gone too far my case manager had conflict of interest due to my having revealed lawsuit against agency where her co renter worked. The director of outreach raved on day about how she had worked there. It is noteworthy that that agency had advertised policy of hiring 51% of its staff as survivors of mental health treatment. After being interviewed for 3 SRO's each being less than 240 Sq. Ft. despite requirement by State and HPD that they be 300 Sq. Ft. I received notice to pack my belongings so outreach team could move me at 10:15AM. I complied but no one showed by 11 AM.

A friend helped me take belongings to storage and upon teaching outreach I was informed that the only service that could be provided was ride to 30th Street Assessment. For weeks later I would get calls from new assigned Common ground Case Manager to provide services. I asked what service could be provided. The response was the only service would be a ride to 30th Street Assessment. My response was that I have a MetroCard. Do not

harass me. Bottom line is that thousands of dollars were spent. Fraud was committed 6 times in submission of HRA 2010e. The provider continued to attempt to get paid to get me to go to 30th Street assessment.

When advocating for a client that had no heat I was harassed by Flat Iron outreach and told by worker that the assistant executive director said, "Hello" after I brought issue to attention of executive director.

The bottom line is that like it was established with HRA that major funding is wasted due to human error on part of workers. People are rotated through administrative transfers in shelters and people's needs are ignored and fraud is done in outreach which destabilizes and averts the established outcomes due to poor training and human error. The dollars wasted could go on low income housing which has been proven since 1994 to have him there quality and better outcomes for less money.

Please enact laws to put checks and balances in place on outreach as well.

Peter Malvan
Co chair NYC CCoC Consumer Committee
jhh_pmalvan@hotmail.com



THE NEW YORK CITY ANTI-VIOLENCE PROJECT

Serving New York City's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual,
Transgender, Queer and HIV-Affected Communities

Good afternoon and thank you to the Committee on General Welfare for holding this hearing, and for incorporating many of the recommendations we and others have made for improving the homeless shelter system in these proposed bills. My name is Talia Gruber and I am the Economic Empowerment Specialist at the New York City Anti-Violence Project. I work on financial stability with LGBTQ survivors of violence, many of whom have interacted with the homeless shelter system. I am here to comment on several of the bills under discussion and to reflect some of the concerns shared by my clients.

Intro 883, which would require the department of homeless services to provide customer service training, is a well-intentioned bill that needs to be expanded to make it effective. It is crucial that DHS be comprehensive in outlining what these trainings must address and who will be providing them. Many of our transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC) clients have been harassed, misgendered, and outed as transgender by security guards and staff in shelter. We have seen several incidents this year where our clients, particularly those who are transgender women of color, are denied entry by staff into shelters that match their gender identity and, when they react in justified enmity, staff members have called the police to have them removed from the premises. Culturally-competent training for staff members needs to take into account the specific needs of LGBTQ communities, especially of TGNC people of color. DHS needs to include trainings on de-escalation that specifically highlight conflict resolution strategies that do not include calling the police. When our clients have the police called on them for matters that could easily be addressed interpersonally, or when our clients have no choice but to leave shelter because of negative interactions with staff members that go unaddressed, our clients are denied the basic human right to shelter. This is an issue that extends beyond customer service training and requires DHS to implement clear methods of evaluation and accountability measures for shelter staff.

In regards to Intro 884 and Intro 1232, requiring reporting on short-notice resident transfer in shelters and posting information on transfer appeals are both important recommendations. However, problems with transfers in shelters extend far beyond issues with reporting and appeals. At AVP, we continue to see clients who require high levels of advocacy from us in order to have their emergency transfer requests taken seriously and in a timely manner. We have had numerous clients this year who were being harassed in shelter because of their gender identity and were subsequently denied valid and time-sensitive emergency transfers, putting them at further risk of harm. Further, many of our clients who are survivors of intimate partner violence often reside in homeless shelters when there is no space in domestic violence shelters. As a result, their abusive partners are more easily able to

locate them, and when there is no knowledge about how to get timely safety transfers, or when DHS staff do not address these transfers swiftly, these clients are often forced to leave shelter or face increased risk of harm. It is crucial that safety transfers are evaluated in a more culturally competent and timely manner, and that information about how to successfully request a transfer be more clearly available to shelter residents, and in the languages and formats they need.

Again, thank you for your work to implement necessary changes to the homeless shelter system, particularly in Intro 1110, where you recommend mandatory housing specialists in all shelters. I hope you will take the thoughts I have presented under advisement as you revise these bills and move them forward.

Testimony 12/17/18 General Welfare Committee

Sasha Alexander, Director of Membership, Sylvia Rivera Law Project

Int. 883, 884, 915, 1110, 1232, 1233 City Council City Charter Amendment re: DHS

Good afternoon, members of the General Welfare Committee, thank you for holding this hearing on Int. 883, 884, 915, 110, 1232, and 1233 regarding DHS. I want to start off by thanking the City Council members who supported these amendments.

My name is Sasha Alexander, I'm a 32 year old black trans non binary organizer and community member. I am the Director of Membership at the Sylvia Rivera Law Project (SRLP) a legal and movement building organization addressing the violence, harassment, and discrimination of low-income Trans and Gender-Non Conforming (TGNC) people and TGNC People of Color (POC).

At SRLP we have a Shelter Organizing Team that emerged as a result of all the alarming safety issues impacting our TGNC members and clients in DHS facilities. The team is made up of TGNC people who are or were in the shelter system or navigated housing instability with other critical programs like HASA. Our leaders guiding this campaign recently released a Know Your Rights (KYR) wallet card for TGNC folks in the DHS Shelter System, it includes information about who to contact if you experience discrimination or harassment as well as information taken from the directives regarding LGBT and TGNC people more specifically and placements. Why did we do this when there is an agency, DHS, that should be making sure this knowledge is made accessible to their clients? For the same reason you all suggested these amendments, there should be more information shared with shelter residents and with City Council and our communities about what is happening in DHS. Our folks are beyond exhausted navigating a system that isn't housing folks adequately and that during the process of sheltering does not provide adequate support- creating uncomfortable, sometimes violent, and traumatic shelter and living experiences.

We are excited 883 specifies that training will occur twice a year and cover necessary topics, however we feel twice a year is not enough and also feel that training should involve folks who have had experience navigating the shelter system.

Thank you for noting that 884 would provide a monthly report to the speaker on transfers, as well as most importantly our communities/be public, again we feel this is a helpful measure however for accountability. We however would suggest that the Speaker also request tracking on grievances filed, if this isn't already included in the oversight you all have.

Per 915 posting on scatter sites and other available listing, again we are thrilled to see this information be more accessible and we would ask to amend this to include a report in print made available on site in each of the shelters listed. Not all residents have access to computers, and having a copy on site would make the resource more accessible to the communities who



HOMELESS SERVICES UNITED

307 W. 38TH STREET, 3RD FLOOR
NEW YORK, NY 10012
T 212-367-1589
www.HSUnited.org

**Testimony of Catherine Trapani, Executive Director, Homeless Services United
The New York City Council Committee on General Welfare
December 17, 2018**

Oversight: Conditions in the DHS Shelter System, Intrs. 915, 1232, 1233, 884, 1110, 883

Good afternoon, my name is Catherine Trapani and I am the Executive Director of Homeless Services United, an organization that represents approximately 50 mission-driven, nonprofit organizations providing a range of services to homeless New Yorkers including street outreach, prevention, shelter and aftercare services in all five boroughs. Thank you Chair Levin, members of the General Welfare Committee and other members of the Council for the opportunity to testify.

This purpose of this afternoon's hearing is to get a sense of where we are as a City with respect to our collective efforts to improve the condition of the shelter system as well as to discuss several pieces of legislation each seeking to improve transparency and the quality of services provided to persons living in shelter. I will speak to each of the bills being heard today later in this testimony but I want to begin by stating that the single most impactful thing the City could do to improve the conditions and quality of services in shelter would be to fully implement promised investments in shelter maintenance, appropriate staff to client ratios, indirect expenses and cost of living increases owed to employees so that service providers have the resources they need to care for the buildings in which clients reside and appropriately staff and manage programs.

While some things have gotten better- DHS has implemented a new 10% contingency on DHS shelter contracts will allow for fast access to funding upon approval for repairs which should allow providers to address issues more quickly in the future and, more contracts were registered before the end of the fiscal year in 2018 than in prior years- more needs to be done to ensure providers have the financial resources to deliver the high quality services homeless New Yorkers need and deserve. Investments in DHS model budget, COLAs and, indirect increases were slated to be implemented for fiscal year 2018 (which ended on June 30th earlier this year) but, most of these funds have yet to reach providers. The last progress update HSU received was in early October when DHS reported that over 400 contract amendments were still pending. This lag in registering contract amendments has meant that service providers continue to rely upon lines of credit to meet expenses, nonemergency repairs remain incomplete and hiring and retaining staff has remained a challenge. Until the full backlog of contract amendments is addressed, conditions are not likely to markedly change.

DHS has committed to providers that all of this funding will be in place soon as the procurement schedule normalizes and they are able to better plan for future fiscal years. We are hopeful that once these basic baseline budget needs are in place the fiscal health of the sector will improve enough so that

we can invest in more comprehensive programming that will help our clients recover from homelessness more quickly in service rich environments that support their transition to permanency.

- There is a need for onsite medical services, particularly at assessment and mental health shelters, to ensure clients have access to buprenorphine to treat opioid addiction.
- Family shelters need social work supervisors to support the social workers recently added to the program so that we can attract top quality staff as they work towards their LCMSW certification.
- All programs need additional funding to afford overtime in accordance with new State regulations that qualify previously exempt supervisors, social workers and case managers for overtime if they work more than 40 hours per week, something often required to ensure continuity of services, particularly in times of crisis for our clients.
- All programs need additional resources to support clients transitioning to permanent housing with the new CityFHEPS program, particularly if the City persists in their plans to pass the responsibility of inspecting clients' apartments to shelter staff.
- Robust aftercare services are necessary for clients transitioning to permanent housing so that should they need support in their new communities, staff will be there to assist to avoid with a crisis that could otherwise result in another episode of homelessness.

All of these service enhancements would greatly improve the wellbeing of families and individuals using the shelter system.

The second most impactful thing to improve the conditions of the shelter system is to ensure that there is more purpose-built shelter available in all five boroughs of the City for those who need it. Currently, shelter capacity is at such a premium that despite tremendous strides in closing cluster apartments, the City still relies heavily upon hotels to meet the need for shelter. Because there are few vacancies in shelter on any given night, the only space available for a new family entering into the system may be far from their youngest child's school or a parent's job. The low vacancy rate means that persons with disabilities and others with unique service needs are difficult to place. Sometimes other households need to be transferred to accommodate the needs of others which can be disruptive to all. The Council has an important role to play in easing the capacity crisis, each of you can work within your districts to identify appropriate sites for shelter and continue your advocacy to ensure more permanent affordable housing resources are dedicated to homeless households. It is not enough to do only one or the other, sadly, there is so much need that even if we were to dramatically increase the number of moves to permanent housing we would still need to open many new shelters in order to close all hotels and clusters for good.

Finally, HSU offers the following comments on the legislation being heard today:

Int. No. 915 in relation to requiring the department of homeless services and human resources administration to post shelter, supportive housing and cluster site data

HSU strongly objects to this legislation. Attempts to force the reporting on the location of shelter and housing services only serves to further stigmatize the persons relying on these housing types. Singling out homeless or formerly homeless supportive housing residents is discriminatory and flagging their homes and forcing public reporting thereof invites harassment and encourages displacement or discourages development of needed housing and shelter facilities.

In order to enhance the wellbeing of homeless persons and provide appropriate services, we must do everything we can to ensure there is sufficient appropriate shelter capacity to meet the demand. That means that every neighborhood in NYC should be open to housing all New Yorkers whether temporarily or permanently.

Intros 1232, 1233 and 884 in relation to notices, policies and procedures related to transfers within the DHS shelter system

Homelessness can result in a feeling of being unmoored and the trauma of dislocation should be minimized to the extent possible including minimizing transfers for clients living in shelters. As stated above, the best way to minimize the need for a transfer is to ensure that capacity is sufficient to ensure available placements are appropriate at intake and, that all shelters have the requisite funding and staffing to accommodate the varying needs of residents. Still, sometimes, transfers may be necessary to accommodate the special needs of a client or, to ensure the safe administration of shelter services in general. When transfers are necessary, we agree that clients should be given appropriate notice and explanation to ease their transition or at least ensure it doesn't feel arbitrary or capricious. Written notice is already required by OTDA and provided to residents who are transferred within the system. Procedures and forms governing transfers in DHS shelters are currently being revised to strengthen the way these regulations are carried out – because the new forms and procedures are still in draft, HSU cannot yet comment on what if any impact Intro 1233 would have. We do however urge the Council to work with DHS to ensure any new local law would complement State regulation to avoid unintended administrative burdens that may not greatly enhance client service.

In keeping with our shared values of transparency the signage Int. 1232 would require is a good idea in principle although, given the complexity and breadth of transfer policies, a single poster may not be able to fully convey all of the information sought in this introduction. HSU would recommend the posting of more general, "know your rights" materials in plain view notifying clients that the full procedures are available upon request. HSU would also recommend that shelter staff at all levels receive periodic training regarding such procedures so that they can be appropriately explained to residents as needed.

HSU has no opinion on Int. 884 regarding a requirement to report the extent to which transfers are used however, we hope that the information received is understood within the context that transfers will continue to be necessary to accommodate the needs of clients in a shelter system with a low vacancy rate and a high demand for specialized services. Easing the capacity crisis by making it easier to develop shelters and housing for homeless New Yorkers would create a vacancy rate that is high enough to allow for thoughtful and appropriate placements at intake and minimize the need for moves.

Int. No. 1110 in relation to housing specialists within the human resources administration and department of homeless services

HSU supports the idea that all persons living in shelter need access to supports to find safe, permanent housing and often, housing specialists are an important tool to help them achieve that. Such staff members do need access to training to cultivate expertise and remain up to date with changes to housing subsidy programs and other benefits and we support the Council's efforts to help ensure there is sufficient funding to hire such staff and that they receive appropriate training. However, Int. 1110 would also require reporting on the number of shelters disaggregated by shelter type and district – this reporting requirement has little to do with ensuring clients get access to appropriate resources but it

could expose address information for HASA and Domestic Violence shelters which cannot be reported on due to confidentiality rules designed to protect clients living in such shelters from stigma. Further, reporting on the number of shelters per district subjects shelters to NIMBYism and would make siting new programs exceedingly difficult. This potential chilling effect on program development and the exposure of shelter residents to harassment would make it harder to accommodate the needs of these particularly vulnerable homeless New Yorkers despite the good intent of this legislation. For this reason, HSU opposes Intro 1110 as written even as we agree and acknowledge the need for additional specialized staff and housing supports throughout the system.

Int. No. 883 in relation to requiring the department of homeless services to provide customer service training

HSU agrees that training is an important tool to help prepare staff of all levels for the challenges associated with worker in high stress environments like shelters. HSU conducts training under a subcontract of an OTDA grant held by the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College on boundaries and professionalism when working with homeless New Yorkers. Our curriculum is quite similar to the subjects enumerated in this bill although available slots are not sufficient to accommodate every staff member citywide. HSU would be happy to share materials with Council staff and welcome the chance to discuss the Council's ideas on how to scale up offerings and ensure that all shelter staff have the opportunity to attend such training. DHS shelters do not have a dedicated budget line for staff training but we understand that DHS is currently exploring ways to enhance training available to its vendors – we look forward to continued conversations on how to further this goal.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We are happy to answer any questions you may have and look forward to continued partnership with the Council to improve the administration of homeless services in New York City.



EVERYONE IN NYC:

NYC COUNCIL'S PLEDGE TO MAXIMIZE SUPPORTIVE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

While there is **unanimous agreement** that **New York City** has a **homelessness crisis** as well as **universal consensus** that **supportive housing** is the **single most humane, effective and cost-efficient means of addressing homelessness** among our most vulnerable citizens;

There are currently **unprecedented City and State resources** available to develop supportive housing...

We encourage the NYC Council to adapt a successful Los Angeles program that includes all stakeholders in the effort to develop enough supportive housing to end chronic homelessness.

Everyone In LA is a multi-year, multi-faceted campaign to build support for developing 10,000 units of supportive housing in Los Angeles over the next ten years. The Campaign employs community organizing, events, tours, public education as well as advocacy with community leaders and electeds to ensure everyone is involved in making sure the most vulnerable homeless people *get homes*.

Everyone In NYC would replicate the spirit of the LA Campaign. Council Members would sign an Everyone In Pledge to Maximize Supportive Housing Development.

EDUCATE STAKEHOLDERS

Hold forums about supportive housing, to help community members understand what supportive housing is -- and what it isn't

TOUR RESIDENCES -

Help to organize tours of supportive housing for local decision-makers. *Seeing is believing.*

HELP FIND SITES

Parking lots * Senior centers * Houses of worship * Libraries * Healthcare facilities * Community centers & settlement houses * Rail yards * Fire stations

BROKER CONVERSATIONS WITH FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Facilitate partnerships between local faith-based organizations and mission-driven nonprofit developers to develop affordable/supportive housing on under-utilized FBO-owned property



Testimony of Trish Marsik, chief Operating Officer, SUS

Intro No. 915

December 17, 2018

Good afternoon Chairman Levin and members of the Committee on General Welfare. Thank you for hearing my testimony today on this very important issue. My name is Trish Marsik, and I am the Chief Operating Officer of Services for the UnderServed, commonly referred to as SUS. SUS is a 40 year old human services organization that annually provides over \$200M in services to 37,000 of our city's most vulnerable citizens—this includes individuals in recovery from mental illness, individuals with developmental disabilities, veterans, women and children who have experienced domestic violence, people who have lost their homes, and individuals and families who have been disadvantaged by poverty. On any given night in 2018, SUS provided housing and shelter to more than 4500 of these New Yorkers. Last year, over 600 individuals moved from our shelters, treatment residences and transitional housing into permanent homes of their own. And 92% of SUS' permanent housing residents maintained stable housing. SUS has a successful track record of serving the residents of 41 of our city's 59 community boards.

The bill being proposed, requiring that the Department of Social Services submit to every council member and community board and post on its website quarterly reports on the number of shelters, supportive housing and cluster sites, will have serious and perhaps unintended consequences for providers such as SUS as well as for the communities we seek to serve and for whom these services may be much needed. Undoubtedly, this bill will highlight the number and location of all shelter, supportive housing and cluster sites in all communities. While it may highlight which communities may be shouldering a disproportionate number of such facilities, it will not prompt those communities with less representation of these facilities to take on any greater responsibility.

The bill presents supportive housing in a negative light, rather than as a positive response to a need; a vehicle for ending chronic homelessness; a means by which affordable housing is brought to communities; and a source for creating much-needed jobs.

Requiring that supportive housing be reported to communities, singles out this housing type as being in need of scrutiny and oversight unlike other forms of permanent affordable housing. This serves only to perpetuate the myth and stigma surrounding supportive housing that leads to unfounded fear and a lack of embrace by communities. In a city with record homelessness and a commitment to 15,000 new units over the next 15 years, it seems that this bill will work in the opposite direction. We note that last year, the Council requested acceleration of production of new supportive housing from 500 to 700 units per year, in acknowledgement that the need is that pressing. With this proposed bill, community boards and council districts may declare a moratorium on supportive housing until they can be assured that all communities will carry their share of this responsibility. However no provision has been made in this bill to help encourage supportive housing in neighborhoods that may not have much of it. This bill could unintentionally lead to a halt in the development of supportive housing, the need for which is growing.

SUS looks forward to working with the Council to build more, much-needed supportive housing across New York City. We are happy to discuss ways to encourage more of it in all neighborhoods. Thanks again for this opportunity, I am happy to answer any questions.

Written Comments of the New York City Coalition of Domestic Violence Residential Providers.
New York City Committee on General Welfare
Hearing re: Intro 1110

December 17, 2018
10:00 a.m.

Good morning Chairperson Levin and members of the Council.

My name is **Jelaine Altino**, I am representing the **New York City Coalition of Domestic Violence Residential Providers**. It is a pleasure to be here today to offer comments on Intro 1110. We are grateful to Council Member Salamanca and the supporting councilmembers of this Bill for proposing a creative and strategic plan to begin to address the housing crisis that exist in New York City. We commend the acknowledgement of such a service gap for the homeless population as described in the Bill, and would also like to highlight the unique circumstances unique to our system when discussing homelessness and domestic violence.

For years, affordable permanent housing has plagued clients residing in shelter. We understand that this is a priority for many families in shelter, but for many others healing from their trauma involves more than just securing permanent housing. For a victim of domestic violence, the dedicated domestic violence shelters are places where survivors seek safety, comfort and healing. Our shelters provide supportive services utilizing client centered and trauma informed approaches. The staffing at our agencies undergo extensive training to ensure that the services delivered to the families are of the highest quality, aligned with the values embedded in said practices.

Currently, many shelters do have dedicated housing specialist onsite. If having a housing specialist in all temporary shelters were the intended mechanism to carry out the goal of this Bill, then we would ask the Bill to provide an opportunity for HRA to fund housing specialists that would be employed by the agency in all domestic violence shelters as opposed to having housing specialists designated by HRA operate within shelters. This would allow such staff to work within the mission of the agency while still addressing the service gap, which has been raised by this Bill. The coalition feels that this consistency of service delivery by staff employed by the individual agencies would ensure that housing specialists are trained to the agency standards and also would streamline the coordination of care.

We additionally ask for further clarification on the requirement for training in "proper case management techniques." The coalition believes that any training needs to be grounded in a thorough understanding of domestic violence and trauma.

Though having a housing specialist at all of the temporary shelters is an important piece to combat the issues related to the housing crisis with regard to domestic violence victims, the

concern may not all lie in whether there is a housing specialist at a shelter, but rather the barriers that exist for our clients in securing affordable permanent housing. These barriers include but are not limited to:

- finding housing in a safe borough designated by HRA, through information gathered from the client's initial assessment,
- the real-estate market in NYC,
- the less than adequate voucher amounts available for families to sustain housing,
- the unethical, discriminatory landlord practices associated with the stigma of being a victim of domestic violence
- the cumbersome process a victim must endure and comply with, while conducting their search and piecing their lives together.

These are just a few of the barriers that limit our clients search and makes for a longer process to secure an affordable apartment. These barriers highlight our caution in setting any programmatic outcomes that might not match the unique needs of the domestic violence shelter population.

We also ask the committee to consider the largest reason for a lack of move outs into permanent housing, which is the lack of affordable housing in New York City. Without an increase in the number of affordable housing units available that match the city subsidies, move outs into permanent housing will remain extremely challenging and limited.

Through this Bill, the City has a real opportunity to introduce a well thought out approach to combating the intersections of homelessness and domestic violence. We look forward to working with the City during this hearing and hope by doing so, we can promote the solidarity necessary to bring these concerns to light and improve efficacy. We thank you for your consideration.



moving victims of violence from crisis to confidence

FOR THE RECORD

**Testimony of
Olga Rodriguez-Vidal, Associate Vice President
Domestic Violence Shelter Program
Safe Horizon**

Comments on Int. 1110 and Int. 915

**Committee on General Welfare
Hon. Stephen Levin, Chair**

New York City Council

December 17, 2018

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Olga Rodriguez-Vidal, and I am the Associate Vice President for Shelter Programs at Safe Horizon. Safe Horizon is the nation's leading victim assistance organization and New York City's largest provider of services to victims of crime. Safe Horizon's mission is to provide support, prevent violence and promote justice for victims of crime and abuse, their families and communities.

My testimony today will focus on Int. 1110, which would require the Human Resources Administration to place housing specialist in domestic violence shelters, as well as other types of shelter, and Int. 915, which would require regular reports of shelter locations in New York City.

Safe Horizon operates eight domestic violence shelters across all five boroughs, and we provide a safe, healing setting to over 700 people each night, more than half of whom are children. Our shelter programs are designed to provide assistance to all domestic violence survivors regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, or income level. We offer a comprehensive range of services including counseling; advocacy; intervention; childcare; practical assistance with food and clothing; transportation; crisis intervention; and other support to meet the needs of survivors and their families.

We offer comments on Intro 1110 and Intro 915 in addition to the dialogue we have shared with the bill sponsor, and look forward to working with the Committee to ensure that these bills are responsive to the needs and safety of domestic violence survivors.

Int. 1110

Safe Horizon appreciates the intent of Int. 1110, as we know that locating affordable, permanent housing can be challenging for individuals leaving the various shelter systems in New York City.

Safe Horizon employs housing specialists in many of our domestic violence shelters, and can attest to the effectiveness of these specialists in assisting individuals to navigate the housing process in New York City. In our domestic violence shelters, the main focus is on safety and healing for the residents. Yet, we recognize that locating long-term, affordable housing is also essential to someone's healing process, and so our housing specialists will assist clients in locating such housing.

Given that Safe Horizon and many of our colleagues within the domestic violence shelter network already have some number of housing specialists in place, we request that implementation focus on coordinating with and complementing existing efforts at domestic violence shelters, rather than duplicating services in within multiple systems. Ideally, under Intro 1110, HRA would allocate resources for domestic violence shelters to have housing specialists employed within their program, as these positions are currently funded by other sources outside of our domestic violence shelter contracts at Safe Horizon.

We also are concerned about the program goals and timetables that are mentioned in the bill, and the possibility that this will lead to unrealistic housing quotas for any housing specialist working with domestic violence survivors. In domestic violence shelters, placing a resident in long-term housing can be a challenge in part because City rules prohibit a domestic violence shelter resident

from using a housing voucher to move to an “unsafe area” (i.e., a neighborhood or borough where the offender lives or works.) We understand the need for metrics in a housing specialist program, and caution against firm quotas for domestic violence shelters. We welcome the opportunity to explore with the committee what performance standards might look like for housing specialists in domestic violence shelters.

We also would like more clarification on the bill’s requirement to provide “proper case management techniques” to our shelter residents. We strongly advocate for all housing specialists to be trained in the dynamics of domestic violence so they can work with shelter residents using a trauma-informed lens.

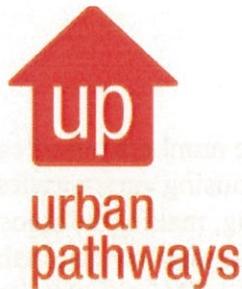
In addition, we recommend that housing incentives that are currently offered to landlords housing families in homeless shelters are extended to include families living in domestic violence shelters. In particular, we urge the City to make the Single One Time Assistance (SOTA) grant available to landlords renting to domestic violence shelter residents.

Above all, we know that current housing specialists in our shelters are focused on finding permanent housing among a very small pool of resources. One of the biggest challenges that Safe Horizon faces in locating permanent housing for individuals once they leave our shelters is the meager housing supply. There is simply not enough affordable housing in New York City, and it can be challenging to locate housing that is affordable and that takes into account the safety concerns that a domestic violence survivor might have. We support efforts that the de Blasio Administration and the City Council have undertaken to preserve and expand affordable housing in New York City, and urge that any implementation of supportive for families in the shelter system must be partnered with a strong push for a bigger supply of affordable housing.

Int. 915

Safe Horizon understands and appreciates the intention of Intro 915, as we know that it is important to have a sense of how certain resources, like shelters, are distributed throughout New York City. We express concerns about including domestic violence shelters in this report, and recommends that bill language clarify which units and types of shelters would be included in this reporting bill. Including specific shelter locations in the report that is described in Intro 915 could have disastrous consequences for residents who are seeking safety in our shelters and could violate State regulations requiring the location of our shelter programs to be confidential. Additionally, we recommend that any information included about domestic violence shelters not include the names of the service providers who operate the shelters, or the names of the shelters themselves. Given the ability of information to spread quickly across the Internet, it could be possible that someone could locate a shelter with even the most basic of information.

Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer any additional questions.



**Testimony before City Council Committee on General Welfare
December 17, 2018 | 1:00pm**

Good afternoon Chair Levin and members of the Committee. My name is Nicole McVinua, and I am the Policy Analyst at Urban Pathways. On behalf of the organization, thank you for the opportunity to testify on Intro. 0915 today.

Urban Pathways is a nonprofit that provides services to chronically homeless individuals through a unique combination of street outreach, safe havens, extended stay residences, permanent supportive housing, and employment programs. Our programs engage homeless adults to come inside, and to succeed and thrive as they move forward. We meet individuals where they are at in their lives, provide them with a range of services appropriate to their needs, and assist them in gaining permanent housing.

Supportive housing is permanent affordable housing with in-house services for those who need extra supports for a variety of reasons, which may include living with a mental illness, a substance use disorder, or another vulnerability. These supports allow individuals to live independent lives, as well as prevents inappropriate utilization of other public systems, such as hospitals, shelters, and jails. We know that supportive housing works. In the last year, 97% of our clients in permanent housing have achieved a full year of stability. Additionally, most permanent supportive housing models, including ours, have affordable units set aside for low-income households, further benefitting the community by increasing their stock of affordable housing. We thank the Council for its unwavering support of supportive housing through the NYC 15/15 commitment to build 15,000 new units of supportive housing over the next 15 years.

To engage chronically homeless individuals who are resistant to receiving services or entering traditional shelter, Urban Pathways utilizes the safe haven model: a smaller, lower threshold model that acts as a critical first step for bringing individuals indoors who have spent extensive time on the streets. Once indoors and experiencing stability, these individuals are able to more successfully engage with services and move on to permanent housing. The limited number of available safe haven beds are in high demand.

Urban Pathways wants to expand our capacity to serve the most vulnerable New Yorkers. In order to do so, we need to open additional program sites. The most difficult aspect of this process is siting locations and gaining approval from the local community.

This brings me to Intro. 0915 which, as you know, will require the Department of Social Services (DSS) to submit quarterly reports on the number of shelters, supportive housing, and cluster sites in each council district and community board. We recognize that Intro. 0915 has good intentions of encouraging siting in districts where supportive housing is lacking. However, we fear this required reporting will actually have the opposite of its intended effect, and instead

steeply curb siting. Those who view the numbers out of context are likely to use them as a bolstering reason to resist supportive housing and homeless services in their communities. This could lead to a “chilling effect” on siting, making it impossible to find locations to build critically needed supportive housing and safe havens. Inability to site supportive housing would hinder the accelerated timeline of NYC 15/15 of 700 units per year, previously requested by the Council.

Community resistance generally comes from both a lack of understanding of service models, and from fear and stigma. Urban Pathways makes every effort to be a good neighbor, to address concerns, and to create ongoing partnerships in the communities where our residences are located. If community boards refuse to hear our proposals, we will never have the opportunity to abate fears, clarify misunderstandings, or create those partnerships. Our organization has unfortunately faced this in the past, and we do not want to see this unintentionally encouraged.

Further, reporting out on the number of these very different types of sites, (shelters, cluster sites, and supportive housing), together could increase misunderstandings about these different models. For instance, cluster sites are an *ineffective* means of providing temporary shelter and the City has committed to *closing* them, while supportive housing is a very *effective* means of providing permanent housing and the City wants to build *more*. Reporting these numbers out together could easily cause confusion around what constitutes a “good” or “bad” number, or what models we want to see increasing and decreasing in districts. This could again lead to increased resistance from communities around building supportive housing in their districts if they equate supportive housing with cluster sites or shelter.

Urban Pathways also firmly believes in the rights of clients to receive services, and to have dignity in doing so. By putting the number of housing units for vulnerable populations on display in each district and community board, we feel the reporting required by Intro. 0915 will further the already existing stigmatization of consumers of supportive housing and homeless individuals.

As an alternative to reporting numbers of supportive housing already in each district, we would like to draw the Committee’s attention to the successful pledge campaign in the city of Los Angeles, another major city with a growing homelessness crisis. L.A. has committed to building 10,000 units of supportive housing, and in order to meet this goal, each of the city’s council members has committed to building a proportion of units in their district and to taking responsibility for ensuring those units come to fruition. This has created a spirit of everyone working together towards a common goal and taking part in meeting the needs of the city. We believe this is an effective example of how districts can come together to encourage more supportive housing throughout the city.

In closing, Urban Pathways opposes Intro. 0915 for its negative potential impact on siting and on clients. We look forward to continuing to work with council members and community boards to combat homelessness across the city through homeless services and supportive housing. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.



Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness
for Women and their Children

**General Welfare Committee Hearing
12/17/18**

**Testimony from Woman In Need on
Int. 0915-2018**

Requiring DHS and HRA to post shelter, supportive housing, and cluster site data



Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness
for Women and their Children

Good afternoon. Thank you to Chair Levin, and all the members of the General Welfare Committee. It is a pleasure to be with you this afternoon. My name is Raysa Rodriguez and I'm the Vice President of Policy and Planning at Win.

On a given night just last week,¹ nearly 22,500 homeless children went to bed under a DHS roof. Of the more than 61,000 homeless New Yorkers in shelter that night, 65% were families with children.

For more than 33 years, Win has provided the safe housing, critical services, and ground-breaking programs to help homeless women and their children rebuild their lives and break the cycle of homelessness.

Last year, Win provided shelter to more than 2,700 homeless families—including almost 5,000 children—and helped nearly 750 families transition out of shelter into permanent homes. In addition to shelter, Win provides 335 apartments of supportive housing. Nearly 440 formerly homeless children have a permanent home in Win supportive housing.

Through helping tens of thousands of families over decades of service, Win understands that safe, clean, purpose built shelters with rich, trauma informed services are critical to the well-being and outcomes of homeless children. Unfortunately, the need for shelters far surpasses New York City's Tier II capacity.

To fill the gap, DHS has little choice but to place thousands of children and their families in cluster sites and hotels each night, often taking children far away from their schools and from the stability of their familiar routines and relationships. What's more, clusters and hotels cannot provide the level of safety and access to services that families need to get back on their feet, and they cost the City more money than quality shelter does.

We also know that for families with complex needs, permanent supportive housing is the most effective tool for breaking the cycle of homelessness. Here, too, supply falls short of the need.

It is vital that we remove roadblocks and make good on our promise to support the work of organizations that are building and opening the quality shelters that will replace costly, subpar cluster sites and hotels. By building the quality shelters homeless children and families need to thrive, and by facilitating development of the supportive housing that our highest need families need to leave homelessness permanently, we can make a difference in the lives of tens of thousands of children and in the seemingly entrenched issue of family homelessness.

As many of our partners will also testify here today, Win believes that the reporting requirements in Intro. 915 would hinder efforts to build the quality shelters and supportive housing our families need.

Every community in New York City has a responsibility to our children. And every community has a role to play in supporting a brighter future for them. But we have seen how the topic of homeless shelters can touch some of the deepest fears and beliefs in our communities, and how this is often expressed in ways that vilify and further stigmatize struggling families. We have also seen how this often results in a

¹ Data from 12/11/18 (DHS Daily Report on 12/12/18)



Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness
for Women and their Children

rejection of what we know is right: creating shelter for our neighbors in need to help them get back on their feet, and creating permanent homes with supportive services for families with complex needs.

Win is committed to supporting transparent government that is accountable to its citizens. However, numbers and locations of shelter and supportive housing buildings is only part of the homelessness story. Publishing them as required by Intro. 915 can serve to inflame fears, block progress on building the quality shelters and supportive housing that will address the family homelessness crisis, and make vulnerable children and families the targets of rejection and stigma.

Instead, we urge the City Council to veto Intro. 915 and consider a different approach to transparency, fairness, and civic engagement. Win has open conversations with community members and elected officials before bringing a new shelter to a community. We believe that this approach- exchange of information and public discussion on a community and shelter level- is the most effective way to move beyond fear to a deeper discussion about family homelessness and the role of communities.

When we remember the real face of homelessness—the young mother lost in thought sitting next to you on the subway, the co-worker who you share your coffee break with, or your child’s playmate on the monkey bars—we can move beyond fear of shelters to implement solutions that help our most vulnerable neighbors, and break the cycle of homelessness for good.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.



Testimony of

Jennifer March
Executive Director

Presented to the
New York City Council
Committee on General Welfare

Oversight: Homeless Shelter Conditions

December 17, 2018

Good afternoon, my name is Jennifer March PhD., and I am the Executive Director of Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, Inc (CCC). CCC is a nonprofit and nonpartisan financially independent child advocacy organization. We educate and mobilize New Yorkers to work towards a city in which every New York City child is healthy, housed, educated and safe. Before I commence my testimony, I extend my thanks to Councilmember Levin, the Chair of the General Welfare Committee and all committee members for this opportunity to testify on the conditions of homeless shelters.

CCC is a leader in a newly formed Family Homelessness Coalition (FHC), we are a co-convenor alongside New Destiny Housing and Enterprise Community Partners, and work with a steering committee of sixteen peer organizations including Advocates for Children; CAMBA; Barrier Free Living; CCC; Coalition for the Homeless; Enterprise Community Partners; The Floating Hospital; Gateway Housing; Henry Street Settlement; Homeless Services United; Monadnock Development; New Destiny Housing; RiseBoro; Safe Horizon; Settlement Housing Fund; and WIN. This coalition was formed years ago in response to the crisis of family homelessness in New York City and we are singularly focused on implementing sustainable solutions for families and children who are either at-risk or currently homeless.

As you well know homeless children and their families constitute nearly 70% of the City's homeless population. There are nearly 13,000 families with nearly 27,000 children living in the City's homeless shelter system, on average, for over 414 days. Although the City's most recent homelessness plan includes the goal of eliminating the use of cluster sites and hotels, this will not be complete until at least 2023. Meanwhile, only 23% of homeless families live in purpose-built shelters with the rest living in hotels or cluster site apartments. As such, the existing homeless service systems are profoundly failing to meet the complex needs of homeless children and families while very few homeless families currently obtain housing through the City's production programs.

Homelessness can create life-long risks to the physical and emotional well-being of children and to their educational success. For example, children experiencing homelessness have an increased risk of illness compared to children who are not homeless: they suffer from four times as many respiratory infections; five times as many gastrointestinal infections; and twice as many ear infections. Additionally, they are four times as likely to suffer from asthma and have high rates of asthma-related hospitalizations. Homeless children are also twice as likely to go hungry as non-homeless children, and they are at an increased risk of obesity due to these nutritional deficiencies.

Homelessness causes traumatic disruptions in the lives of children, who, in addition to losing their homes, experience loss of their friends and community, sense of security, routines, possessions, and privacy. Homelessness also makes families more vulnerable to other forms of trauma, such as witnessing violence, physical or sexual assault, and abrupt separation from family members. As a result, homelessness increases a child's risk of experiencing mental health problems. For example, half of school-age homeless children experience anxiety, depression, or withdrawal, compared to 18 percent of children who are not homeless, and one in three homeless children ages eight and under suffers from a major mental disorder.

The impact of homelessness can also be devastating to a child's education because it often causes disruptions that impact their attendance and academic performance, with 62% of homeless children chronically absent from school. Despite city policy, the limited shelter capacity has resulted in only 50% of families with children in shelter being placed in the borough where the youngest child was going to school.

There are many challenges we collectively face as we seek to help address the issue of family homelessness.

First, there is a general lack of public awareness of this hidden humanitarian crisis, including the often-overlooked fact that most homeless individuals belong to a family with children. The average family that is homeless includes a woman of color in her 30s with several young children. In addition to having been uprooted from her home and community, there is great likelihood that she has been a victim of domestic violence.

Second, there is a perception that most homeless families with children only need a housing subsidy to successfully transition out of the homeless system whereas the reality is that many families require varying levels of support to ensure long-term housing stability and prevent a return to shelter. It is critical that we remember, that these primarily single mothers are trying to live, work, and raise a family in NYC. A city where rent costs outstrip income, and where access to critical supports – whether that is nutrition benefits, cash assistance, child care, afterschool, summer programming, health and mental health care - all play a profoundly important role in the reduction of stressors, promoting the development of peer and social networks that bring stability and promote wellbeing.

Third, an additional major challenge to effectively addressing this crisis is the siloed approach to program and budgetary planning. Preventing and ending family homelessness and ensuring the well-being of children will require a persistent and comprehensive collaborative efforts across multiple city agencies. We look to the City administration and the City Council to press for needed collaborative work across systems and agencies.

There is no doubt that, over the past several years, both City and State Administrations have begun to devote significant resources to combatting homelessness. Specifically, the City has expanded eviction prevention services including a right to counsel, created new rental assistance programs, expanded its Homebase homelessness prevention program, and developed a plan to create 90 new purpose-built shelters. Both the City and State have developed and implemented new affordable and supportive housing plans and the State has funded a pilot rental assistance program in New York City and Rochester.

For its part the City Council has passed legislation requiring that parents receive information and a phone number to call about their rights regarding education when they enter DHS' Prevention Assistance and Temporary Housing intake center. The Council is also advancing a legislative proposal to improve school bus transportation for homeless children as well as legislation that would increase the percentage of set-asides in affordable housing development, dedicated to address the needs of the homeless. Finally, we applaud the City Council for championing increased resources for Bridging the Gap social workers and hope to work with you to ensure that these resources are not only baselined but enhanced in the upcoming budget process.

While the Coalition welcomes these increased resources and programmatic reforms, much more needs to be done, and the comments offered today on proposed introductions should be considered in the context of the need to address the needs of homeless children and their families in ways that reduce entrance into shelter, reduce trauma, improve well-being while in shelter, and ensure that housing placement is successful.

Intro 883 and Intro 1110 – Intro 883 would require the Department of Homeless Services to provide customer service training and Intro 1110 would require housing specialists within the Human Resource Administration and the Department of Homeless Services.

As CCC is not a direct service provider, I defer to my colleagues who are service providers here today to offer greater detail on the impact that new training or staffing requirements might have on their work. I would caution however that CCC is concerned about the layering on of any new requirements without the commitment of resources to support these efforts - especially at a time when (despite fruitful model budget discussions) there are approximately 400 outstanding DHS contract amendments that need to be registered so that shelter providers can have the resources to right size budgets and address long standing building violations and service gaps.

Intro 1232 would require homeless shelters to post signs and distribute other materials relating the shelter transfer appeals process and Intro 1233 requires written notice for non-emergency shelter transfers.

Regarding Intro 1233 we believe there may be State provisions on transfer notices already. It is not clear to us that the Intro is needed if the state provision is followed or enforced.

Regarding 1232, we strongly encourage the Council to amend the Introduction to include information on the process for requesting transfers for school-related reasons on the signs that shelters would be required to post regarding transfers.

Maintaining enrollment in the same school with their same teachers and friends can be a key source of stability for children in shelter. But for the weeks in between the time the family is placed in shelter and the time school bus service begins, long commutes between shelter and school mean that parents are often put in an untenable position of choosing between keeping shelter and housing appointments on one hand and taking their children to school. For some families placed in shelter far away from their children's school, a transfer to a different shelter may be the only way that children can maintain school stability.

While there is currently a process for DHS to approve shelter transfers for reasons related to children's education, the availability of such transfers and the process to request one, are not well publicized. As a result, families, and even shelter staff, often do not know about the availability of transfers for school-related reasons or how to request such a transfer.

We recommend adding the following language to Intro 1232:

"A statement that residents may request a transfer to a shelter closer to their child's school; the process for requesting such a transfer, including the name and contact information for staff in the department's family services division who can help with such a transfer; and a statement that if the department has an appropriate unit available, it will give the resident 48 hours to accept or decline the transfer to a shelter closer to the school."

Intro 884 and Intro 915 – Intro 884 would require DHS to report on short notice residential transfers in shelter and 915 would require the Department of Homeless Services and Human Resource Administration to post shelter, supportive housing, and cluster site data.

CCC, as you may know, has created the largest municipal level database on children and families in the country. We believe in the power of data to inform policy, program, legislative and budgetary decisions as well as the critical role it plays in helping New Yorkers at large to understand the needs 1.8 million NYC children and their families, and we believe that data plays a seminal role in effective advocacy.

We agree with the City Council that it is critical that data be collected in a manner that helps to inform our collective understanding of the needs of those who are homeless and any changes that occur within the homeless population or the service delivery system in this city. That said, special attention must also be paid to ensure that data collection efforts do not stigmatize the homeless nor arm community groups with information that can result in the blocking of the development of desperately needed new community based, purpose-built shelters.

Rather than collect and disseminate information of the location of shelter, cluster site, and supportive housing, we would urge the Council for focus data collection efforts on demographic and programmatic information that would allow for a better assessment of the needs of homeless families as well as measure progress on city efforts to divert families for shelter all together and progress on its commitment to move families out of hotels and into purpose built shelters and stable, permanent housing options.

To this end we recommend that the Council explore the following data collection needs:

- The number of families connected to eviction prevention or rapidly rehoused
- The number of children and families in hotel placements
- The number of children and families in cluster site placements
- The number of families benefitting from rent subsidies, affordable housing and supportive housing
- The demographic profile of families who are homeless (e.g., the age, race, gender of the adult head of household and his or her education level and employment status; the number and age or age range of children in the household)
- The percent of young children in shelter enrolled in early education programs, after-school programs, and summer camps

We must focus on the urgent need to improve the condition of hotel placements, and the City Council has a central role to play in the success of the development of community based, purpose-built shelters.

Currently thousands of families with children are living in hotel rooms, far from transportation options, schools, and social supports and family and friends. The hotels not only lack recreational space and laundry facilities but do not permit cooking or fresh produce on site, and families are required to change rooms every 30 days. The hotels are a recipe for life long trauma as they perpetuate social isolation and are not conducive to meeting the very basic needs of children and families.

Because we do not want hotels to be a permanent shelter option, there is an urgent need to develop cost-effective short-term solutions to bring laundry and cooking facilities onsite, as well as recreational programming and social workers. I urge the Council to work with us and fellow direct service providers and advocates to identify ways in which the conditions of hotels can be improved upon.

Finally, there is no greater role that the Council can play than to help New Yorkers embrace who is in fact homeless. The families in the homeless system – mothers and their young children – desperately want to regain stability and to benefit from a safe home and be part of a community – working, going to school – thriving in ways that every NYC family strives for. We need to make progress on the 90 new shelters and furthermore we’ve an opportunity to ensure that once families are permanently housed, that they benefit from an intentional connection to community-based services that have proven to reduce social isolation and promote the development of peer and social networks as well as child and family well-being. We look forward to working with the City Council to obtaining city and state support for a community-based service coordinator that can be embedded in CBOs with a long history of serving families.

Family Homelessness Coalition Platform

THE ASK:

The Family Homelessness Coalition, a coalition representing service providers, housing providers, children's organizations, and advocacy organizations, urges the City of New York to launch a coordinated, multi-agency, collaborative effort focused on the needs of homeless children and their families to prevent homelessness where possible, improve the well-being of children and families in shelter, and support the long-term stability of children and families who leave shelter.

INTRODUCTION: Accomplishing bold, ambitious, large-scale efforts to address income inequality has been the hallmark of the first term of the de Blasio administration. The Mayor, in just four years, has implemented a number of complex, comprehensive initiatives including a full-day universal Pre-K program, a multi-agency Thrive initiative helping New Yorkers access mental health services, and the Vision Zero traffic safety plan that has saved countless pedestrian lives.

The de Blasio administration has also achieved important successes in the critical areas of housing and homelessness, problems that have challenged a number of previous administrations. Under Mayor de Blasio, the city administration has:

- Met or exceeded the annual goals to create or preserve 200,000 units of affordable housing;
- Developed NYC 15/15 to create 15,000 units of supportive housing over 15 years;
- Created city-funded rental assistance programs, which have helped over 15,000 families with children leave the shelter system;
- Significantly decreased homelessness caused by evictions by an unprecedented investment in legal services for low-income tenants; and
- Developed a plan to eliminate the use of cluster sites and hotels for homeless individuals and families and to create or expand 90 new purpose-built shelters.

The Mayor's second term offers the opportunity to build on past successes by launching a coordinated, multi-agency effort to combat family homelessness designed to increase affordable housing options for homeless families while promoting the well-being of children and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

WHY NOW:

- **Almost 70% of homeless New Yorkers are children and their families.**
- There are over 23,000 children from nearly 13,000 families in the DHS shelter system alone with at least another 4,000 children in homeless shelters operated by HRA, HPD and DYCD.
- Homelessness is traumatic for children and their families and can have long-term negative impacts on children's health, mental health, education and ultimately their likelihood of being a homeless adult.
- The average length of shelter stay for homeless families is well over a year.
- 1 in 10 NYC school children were homeless last year and 62% of homeless children are chronically absent from school.
- Nearly 25% of the families in shelter have current or previous history with the City's child welfare agency.
- Only half of homeless families with children are in Tier II shelters built to house homeless families—many are in commercial hotels where they do not have access to kitchens, laundry, or recreational space.

**The Family Homelessness Coalition Wants to Partner with the Mayor, the de Blasio Administration and
the City Council to Make Reducing Family Homelessness,
While Fostering the Well-being of Homeless Children and their Families,
a TOP PRIORITY for the Next 4 Years**

THE GOAL: The goal of a coordinated, multi-agency effort is: 1) to strengthen prevention and post-shelter services for families with children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness; 2) to provide safe and appropriate purpose-built shelter that promotes child and family well-being when shelter is unavoidable; and 3) to create more permanent housing for homeless families.

THE STRATEGY:

1) Strengthen prevention & post-shelter services for at-risk families:

- a) Pilot an alternative to shelter program model for domestic violence survivors that permits survivors to remain in their current housing, if they can do so safely, or move quickly to other permanent housing.
- b) Improve and expand aftercare services for homeless families leaving shelter for permanent housing by using family advocates and formerly homeless parents to help homeless families adjust to their new communities and housing.
- c) Strengthen the assessment process for identifying the needs of homeless families with children to better match shelter, housing, subsidies and services to the families' needs.
- d) Improve public awareness of and access to existing prevention programs and other services critical to housing stability.

2) Promote child and family well-being when shelter is unavoidable:

- a) Ensure educational stability and success for homeless children by: 1) quickly arranging for transportation to school; and 2) informing families of their options and the kinds of assistance available when they enter shelter.
- b) Ensure that all family shelters connect children to early intervention, early education, after-school and summer programming, and connect parents to needed supports. Ensure homeless children have opportunities for play and socialization through communal spaces and opportunities to participate in activities outside of the shelter.
- c) Train shelter staff in trauma-informed care and require that all policies and procedures are executed and implemented with a trauma lens.
- d) Improve the physical environment and access to services and basic needs for families in hotels.

3) Create more permanent housing resources for homeless children and their families:

- a) Develop a 15-year rental subsidy that is project and tenant based.
- b) Increase significantly the number of units for homeless families with children in HPD/HDC preservation and new construction projects, NYCHA public housing, and in projects using Affordable New York tax incentives.
- c) Develop a service-enriched permanent housing model for vulnerable homeless families who are ineligible for NYC 15/15 supportive housing.
- d) Provide incentives for private developers to include housing for homeless families in projects developed under Mandatory Inclusionary Housing.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Jennifer March, Citizens' Committee for Children, jmarch@cccnewyork.org

Elizabeth Ginsburg, Enterprise Community Partners, eginsburg@enterprisecommunity.org

Carol Corden, New Destiny, ccorden@newdestinyhousing.org



New York City Council's Committee on General Welfare Hearing on Int. 0915-2018

**Testimony Of
Breaking Ground
For the New York City Council**

December 17, 2018

Good afternoon, Chairman Levin and Committee Members. My name is Brenda Rosen and I am President and CEO of Breaking Ground, New York City's largest developer and operator of supportive housing for low income and chronically homeless New Yorkers. I also serve as chair of the board of directors of the Supportive Housing Network of New York, and as a board member of Homeless Services United. We are grateful for the opportunity to testify before the Committee on General Welfare today regarding Int. 915.

Breaking Ground currently operates over 20 buildings (more than 4,000 units) of permanent and transitional housing in Manhattan, Brooklyn, the Bronx and Queens – and has a development pipeline of more than 1,000 housing units over the next five years. We also manage the street outreach program, Street-to-Home, in Brooklyn, Queens and Midtown Manhattan, which connects the most entrenched, long-term homeless individuals with housing and other critical supportive services.

Breaking Ground operates programs and housing in the council districts of almost every member of this committee. Your commitment, your partnership, makes our work – and, crucially, our success – possible. Together, over the last 28 years, with your support, we have helped over 14,000 people escape homelessness, including veterans, seniors, artists, youth-aging out of foster care, those living with addiction and chronic illnesses, and many more.

The City is facing a serious homelessness and affordable housing crisis. To reach our shared goals of bringing people off the streets and into housing, we need to strengthen every part of the continuum of services, including street outreach, emergency shelters, transitional housing, and permanent supportive and affordable housing.

The ability to deliver this continuum of services – from street to home – relies heavily on community support. To get here we have had to overcome countless misconceptions and loads of opposition over the years. However, through strong collaborations with key community stakeholders, such as East Brooklyn Congregations and South Bronx Churches, along with you and your colleagues across the City, we have been able to increase community engagement and education, and overcome community fears. Communities that once feared us, now see us as

strong assets. But, there is still work to do. Many people still don't understand the need for, or the extraordinary benefits of, supportive housing.

The proposed Int. 915 bill has the potential to set us backwards. This bill treats supportive housing as different and distinct from other types of permanent affordable housing, which only serves to further stigmatize it as "undesirable" and perpetuate the fears we have all worked so hard to change. Two key goals of the 15/15 plan, to create 15,000 new units of supportive housing, were to "streamline development" and "improve community engagement for new supportive housing projects." This bill does not address those aims, instead creating a new reporting requirement that would seem to label supportive housing as a negative for communities across New York City. This will inevitably slow or halt the production of new supportive housing units – along with much-needed affordable units – in community boards and council districts across the city.

Similarly, publishing shelter locations, and total unit counts, can have a chilling effect on the sector's ability to site new shelters. That, in turn, makes it more difficult for us to bring people off the streets, ensure that families experiencing homelessness are sheltered near the schools they attend, that single adults are sheltered near jobs and transportation, and that people with a higher level of need get appropriate care as quickly as possible.

Rather, our focus should be on educating the community on the benefits of supportive housing.

Supportive housing is a proven positive: ending chronic homelessness, adding affordable housing to the community, improving property values, reducing crime, and creating jobs.

Breaking Ground and our partners in the supportive housing sector often include community assets, such as storefronts that are home to new retail or community-based organizations, meeting spaces that can be used by community members and local precincts, community gardens and public plazas that increase green space, and community-focused programming that engages with the neighborhoods around our residences.

Requiring reporting of unit counts, without other context, will lead some community boards and council districts to call for delays or even a freeze in the siting of shelters and supportive housing. It has happened before, and we fear it will happen again. And that could not come at a worse time.

Last year the Council requested that funding be accelerated to produce new supportive units, from 500 units per year to 700. We applauded that goal. To achieve it will require new partnerships between communities and supportive housing developers, and we have seen such partnership succeed time and time again. This bill, however, will make our work with communities more difficult.

We urge the council to encourage more collaboration between communities and supportive housing developers so that project siting and construction can happen faster. Doing so will build momentum to help move people out of shelters and off the streets to permanent homes, paired with onsite services that they need to remain stable in housing.

Respectfully submitted by:
Brenda E. Rosen, President and CEO
Breaking Ground
505 8th Avenue – 5th Floor
New York, NY 10018
(212) 389-9322 x9356
brosen@breakingground.org



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

Testimony to be delivered to the New York City Council Committee on General Welfare

Re: Homeless Shelters

December 17, 2018

Board of Directors

Eric F. Grossman, *President*
Jamie A. Levitt, *Vice President*
Harriet Chan King, *Secretary*
Paul D. Becker, *Treasurer*
Matt Berke
Jessica A. Davis
Lucy Fato
Robin L. French
Brian Friedman
Kimberley D. Harris
Caroline J. Heller
Maura K. Monaghan
Jon H. Oram
Jonathan D. Polkes
Steven F. Reich
Veronica M. Wissel
Raul F. Yanes

Executive Director

Kim Sweet

Deputy Director

Matthew Lenaghan

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. My name is Randi Levine, and I am Policy Director at Advocates for Children of New York. For more than 45 years, Advocates for Children has worked to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds. We are proud to house NYS-TEACHS, the New York State Technical and Education Assistance Center for Homeless Students, which works on several thousand cases each year regarding the educational needs of students in temporary housing in New York.

Earlier this year, we released data showing that, over the course of the 2017-2018 school year, New York City schools identified nearly 38,000 students as living in shelter. Students living in shelter have worse educational outcomes than their permanently housed peers on a number of measures. The most recent data indicate that 53% of students living in shelters were absent on 20 or more school days—missing the equivalent of *one month* of school, only 15% of third through eighth grade students living in shelters scored proficiently in reading and only 12% scored proficiently in math, and 10% of middle and high school students living in shelters were suspended from school.

According to the most recent Mayor's Management Report, in Fiscal Year 2018, the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) placed only 49.8% of families in shelter in the same borough as the youngest child's school. Maintaining enrollment in the same school with their same teachers and friends can be a key source of stability for children in shelter. However, for the weeks in between the time the family is placed in shelter and the time school bus service begins, long commutes between shelter and school mean that parents are often put in the untenable position of choosing between keeping various shelter and housing appointments and taking their children to school. For some families placed in shelter far away from their children's school, a transfer to a different shelter may be the only way that children can maintain school stability.

While there is currently a process for DHS to approve shelter transfers for reasons related to children's education, the availability of such transfers and the process to



request one are not well publicized. As a result, families, and even shelter staff, often do not know about the availability of transfers for school-related reasons or how to request such a transfer.

We have seen the positive impact of school-based shelter transfers. For example, we requested a shelter transfer for a family whose children attended a school in Brooklyn and had been placed in a shelter in the Bronx. The bus picked up the children at 5:10 in the morning and did not drop them off until 6:30 in the evening. This long commute was taking a toll on the children. After we reached out to DHS, DHS granted a transfer to a shelter in Brooklyn, vastly reducing the children's commute, making it possible for them to stay in their original school. In another case, a Bridging the Gap social worker from a school in Brooklyn reached out to us about a family placed in a shelter in Manhattan who had strong connections to the Brooklyn school and school staff. The long commute was threatening the child's continued enrollment. Once we requested a shelter transfer, DHS was able to place the family in a shelter just four blocks away from the child's school. However, these families did not know they could ask for a shelter transfer until they were connected with Advocates for Children.

While DHS may not be able to transfer every child who would benefit from being closer to school, it is important for families to know that shelter transfers for school-related reasons are possible and to know the process.

We appreciate that Intro 1232 would require shelters to post signs with information for families about shelter transfers. We recommend that the Council amend this bill to include the process for requesting transfers *for school-related reasons* on these signs.

We recommend adding the following language to Intro 1232:

A statement that residents may request a transfer to a shelter closer to their child's school; the process for requesting such a transfer, including the name and contact information for staff in the department's family services division who can help with such a transfer; and a statement that if the department has an appropriate unit available, it will give the resident at least 48 hours to accept or decline the transfer to a shelter closer to the school.

In addition, we offer the following recommendations that would help improve the education of children living in shelters:

- The City should baseline and increase funding for the Department of Education (DOE) Bridging the Gap social workers who focus on providing counseling and



advocacy to students living in shelters at schools with high concentrations of these students. Currently, the Administration is funding 53 Bridging the Gap social workers, and the City Council is funding an additional 16 Bridging the Gap social workers. However, the funding is only for the current school year. Furthermore, 30 schools have 70 or more students living in shelter and no Bridging the Gap social worker. While the DOE recently announced that it will place community coordinators in schools with high numbers of students in temporary housing, these coordinators are not trained social workers and lack the qualifications to provide students with the counseling they often need to address the trauma of housing loss. The City should increase the number of Bridging the Gap social workers from 69 to 100 and baseline the funding.

- The City should launch an Education Support Center at PATH and ensure that DOE staff meet with every family applying to shelter to discuss their educational options, where their children will be going to school, how their children will get there, and resources for their children. The staff members should also help to identify and address cases in which there will be barriers to school attendance (e.g., a parent with a disability who will not be able to transport her young child to school before bus service begins).
- The City should amend its child care plan to make all children who are homeless eligible for child care. Currently, not all children who are living in shelters are eligible for subsidized child care. As a result, they may be unable to participate in EarlyLearn or other early childhood education programs that require child care eligibility. Meanwhile, the City has vacant EarlyLearn seats. The City should also expand its outreach efforts to enroll more children living in shelters in early childhood education programs.
- The City should ensure that shelter-based social workers receive training in how to conduct developmental screenings of young children, the requirements to refer young infants and toddlers suspected of having developmental delays or disabilities to the Early Intervention program, the preschool special education process, and best practices for supporting families in applying to and enrolling their children in high-quality early childhood education programs.
- The City should enact Intro 150, establishing a task force to focus on transportation for students living in shelters.
- The City should increase opportunities for students living in shelter to participate in after-school and summer programs.



-
- The City should develop a plan to increase the percentage of children placed in shelters within their community school district of origin so that they can stay in their schools without long commutes. The City should also return to reporting on the number of families placed in shelter in the *community school district* of the youngest child's school rather than the number of families placed in the *borough* of the youngest child's school.
 - The City should develop a plan to avoid placing children in hotels, which lack the support services children need, are not designed to accommodate children who stay for long periods of time, and often require students to endure long commutes to school.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



Testimony of

Coalition for the Homeless

And

The Legal Aid Society

On

Oversight: Homeless Shelter Conditions

Presented before
New York City Council
Committee on General Welfare

Giselle Routhier
Policy Director
Coalition for the Homeless

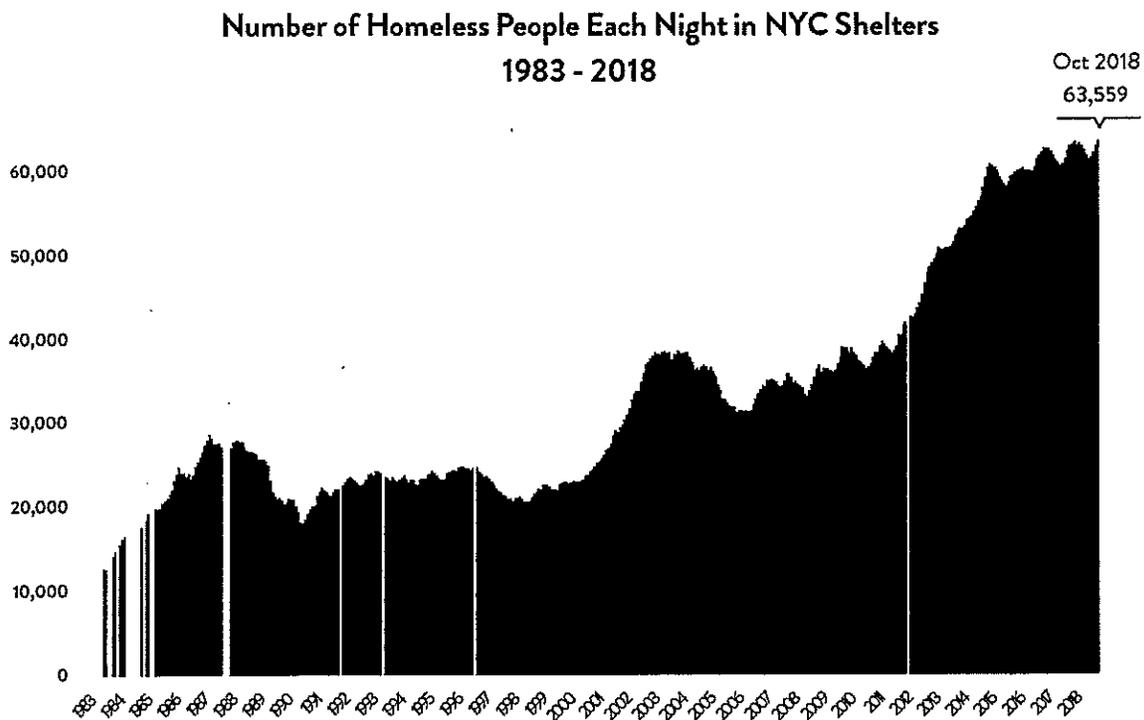
Beth Hofmeister
Staff Attorney
The Legal Aid Society

December 17, 2018

The Coalition for the Homeless and The Legal Aid Society welcome this opportunity to testify before the New York City Council Committee on General Welfare regarding shelter conditions for homeless New Yorkers.

Record Homelessness in NYC

New York City remains in the midst of the worst homelessness crisis since the Great Depression, as the number of men, women, and children sleeping in shelters each night reached a new record high of 63,559 in October. The number of homeless single adults has now surpassed 17,000 for the first time ever, and shows no sign of abating. Indeed, in the past three months, the number of homeless single adults has reached a new record high 21 times.



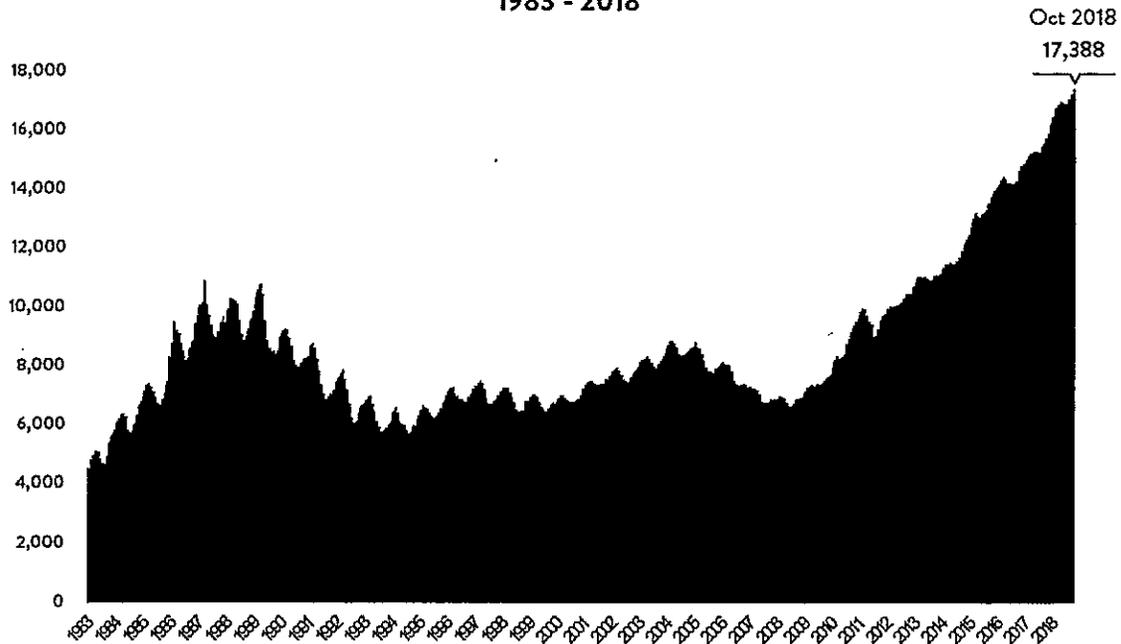
*Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services; LL37 Reports
Data include individuals in DHS municipal system, Safe Havens, stabilization beds, veteran's shelters, criminal justice beds, and HPD emergency shelters.*

Data from the City and State indicate large increases in the number adults being released from State prisons directly to the shelter system; increases in the number of adults discharged from medical, psychiatric, or other institutions; and increases in the number of adults being forced into homelessness from tenuous housing situations, such as overcrowded or unsafe living environments.¹ For families, domestic violence, eviction, and overcrowding continue to be the top factors immediately precipitating homelessness.²

¹ Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services, via FOIL, and NYS Department of Corrections and Community Supervision.

² Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services, via FOIL

Number of Homeless Single Adults Each Night in NYC Shelters 1983 - 2018



Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services and Human Resource Administration; LL37 Reports

Shelter Conditions

The record number of individuals and families in shelters necessitates a comprehensive examination into shelter conditions and upkeep. As the court-appointed independent monitors of the single adult shelter system and the City-appointed independent monitors of the family shelter system, we gather a steady stream of information about shelter conditions through in-person visits, joint inspections, and resident complaints. The most common issues we encounter fall into three broad categories: large-scale capital needs, cleanliness and regular maintenance, and disability accommodations.

Large-scale capital needs are most prevalent at older, larger, City-owned shelters and most commonly involve heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) issues; leaks and plumbing issues; bathroom fixture degradation; electrical capacity; and broken elevators, among other issues. The City's Fiscal Year 2019 Capital Commitment Plan lists capital projects at shelters that have been ongoing for years. The State also inspects shelters to determine whether they are in compliance with its rules and issues reports of those inspections, which require shelters to correct any deficiencies. We urge the City to speed up progress on addressing outstanding physical plan issues, particularly those targeting critical daily needs of residents, including boiler updates, roof repairs, bathroom repairs, and elevator repairs.

In addition to capital repairs, routine cleaning and maintenance of facilities is an ever-present problem. It is a common occurrence for a late-night visit by one of our shelter monitors to uncover filthy bathroom conditions. This situation is particularly prevalent on overnight and

weekend shifts. In more than one instance, we have met residents who have attempted to take charge of cleaning themselves, despite lacking proper supplies. This situation can and should be rectified by adding or redirecting maintenance staff to shifts where they are most needed.

Although we spoke at length on this issue at the last General Welfare Committee hearing, disability accommodations in shelters are an important component when considering physical conditions. Pursuant to the settlement in *Butler v. City of New York*, a class-action lawsuit The Legal Aid Society filed on behalf of the Coalition for the Homeless, the Center for Independence of the Disabled-New York (CIDNY), and disabled homeless New Yorkers, the City has hired a consultant to assess barriers to shelter system accessibility, including intake offices and the shelters themselves. With the information it gathers from the surveys, the City will propose a remediation plan to bring the shelter system into compliance with its legal obligation to accommodate the disabilities of homeless New Yorkers. Presumably, in order to fulfill this task, the City will be required to open new sites that are accessible to more clients, which is consistent with the City's goals in the *Turning the Tide* plan of closing older, deficient shelters and ceasing the use of cluster sites and commercial hotels. We will closely monitor this effort to ensure that the City is able to meet the needs of our clients.

Lastly, we routinely witness and hear well-founded concerns about the lack of dignity many people in shelters feel as a result of the environments they are living in. We know that shelters are not homes, but some of the daily conditions and practices serve to make the experience of homelessness even more traumatic and dehumanizing for individuals and families. Some examples of such practices include: requiring individuals to request toilet paper every time they need to use the restroom; being provided with low-quality food, not enough food, or being denied second portions of food; and not being provided adequate laundry services.

Intros: 883, 884, 915, 1110, 1232, 1233

Of the bills introduced at today's hearing, we offer the following comments:

- Intro 915 would require reporting on permanent supportive housing and shelters, disaggregated by community board and council district. Although we understand the importance of open data, we are concerned that these numbers would be used solely to prevent the opening of much-needed emergency shelters and supportive housing and additionally stigmatize homeless individuals and families, including those living with disabilities. The focus on data production should remain on the needs of homeless individuals and families themselves, including for example: the number of people found eligible for supportive housing and the number actually receiving it; the number of supportive housing tenants who have retained their housing for more than one, two, and three years; the number of supportive housing units gained (and lost) each year; and similar metrics. We would also recommend regular reporting on the number of City-financed affordable housing units (separate from supportive housing) that have been built and preserved for homeless households, as well as the number of homeless households that have actually moved into such units.
- Intro 1110 would require the designation and training of housing specialists in domestic violence shelters, HASA shelters, and DHS shelters, as well as reporting on such shelters. While housing specialists are needed across the system, in addition to more affordable housing, the reporting requirements that all shelters be disaggregated by community

district and type of shelter pose serious privacy concerns for individuals living with HIV/AIDS and survivors of domestic violence. These vulnerable New Yorkers are entitled to a considerable degree of confidentiality about their health conditions and crime victim status, which could be jeopardized by such disclosures.

- Regarding Intros 1232, 1233, and 884, which all relate to shelter transfers, it is important to note that many of the process issues that come up with transfers are directly related to a lack of capacity, which inhibit DHS' ability to appropriately manage transfers with timely notice and respond to reasonable accommodation requests. It is therefore extremely important to focus on expanding the production of affordable housing in the Mayor's *Housing New York 2.0* to provide homeless households an exit out of shelters and reduce the strain on the system. It will also be important, in some instances, to open new shelter capacity to maintain a better-functioning system. We urge the Council to focus on efforts to reduce shelter crowding so that appropriate transfers can be made rationally and transparently, rather than limiting the City's ability to add new, accessible capacity.
- Intro 883 would require customer service training for shelter employees. We agree better training is required in many instances, but effectiveness will depend largely on how the training is implemented, and we urge the Council to demand that the City report on how it will conduct the training and implementation of any such program.

Conclusion

We want to thank the Council for holding this important hearing and continuing to focus on the dire issue of homelessness in New York City.

About The Legal Aid Society and Coalition for the Homeless

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

The Legal Aid Society has performed this role in City, State and federal courts since 1876. It does so by capitalizing on the diverse expertise, experience, and capabilities of more than 1,100 lawyers, working with some 800 social workers, investigators, paralegals, and support and administrative staff. Through a network of borough, neighborhood, and courthouse offices in 26 locations in New York City, the Society provides comprehensive legal services in all five boroughs of New York City for clients who cannot afford to pay for private counsel.

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

The Legal Aid Society's unique value is an ability to go beyond any one case to create more equitable outcomes for individuals and broader, more powerful systemic change for society as a whole. In addition to the annual caseload of 300,000 individual cases and legal matters, the Society's law reform representation for clients benefits 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. The Society, in collaboration with Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler, LLC, filed *C.W. v. The City of New York*, a federal class action lawsuit on behalf of RHY in New York City. Our goal in litigation is to ensure that the City creates and maintains enough youth-specific beds to meet the needs of *all* youth seeking shelter. The Society, along with institutional plaintiffs Coalition for the Homeless and Center for Independence of the Disabled – NY, settled *Butler v. City of New York* on behalf of all disabled New Yorkers experiencing homelessness.

Coalition for the Homeless: Coalition for the Homeless, founded in 1981, is a not-for-profit advocacy and direct services organization that assists more than 3,500 homeless New Yorkers each day. The Coalition advocates for proven, cost-effective solutions to the crisis of modern homelessness, which is now in its fourth 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 illness 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 solutions and include: Supportive housing for families and individuals living with AIDS; job-training for homeless and formerly homeless 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 distributes over 900 nutritious hot meals each night to homeless and hungry New Yorkers on the streets of Manhattan and the Bronx. Finally, our Crisis Intervention 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.

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 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.

USDC SDNY
DOCUMENT
ELECTRONICALLY FILED
DOC #:
DATE FILED: 12/4/2018



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
LAW DEPARTMENT
100 CHURCH STREET
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10007

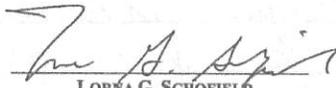
ZACHARY W. CARTER
Corporation Counsel

DANIELLE M. DRASSER
Assistant Corporation Counsel
Phone: (212) 356-2469
Fax: (212) 356-3558
Email: ddrasser@law.nyc.gov

December 3, 2018

Plaintiff shall file a response to this letter and the letter at Dkt. 59 by December 21, 2018. The Clerk of Court is respectfully directed to mail a copy of this Order to pro se Plaintiff. SO ORDERED.

Dated: December 4, 2018
New York, New York


LORNA G. SCHOFIELD
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

Re: Towaki Komatsu v. City of New York, et al.
18 CV 3698 (LGS) (GWG)

Your Honor:

I am an Assistant Corporation Counsel in the office of Zachary W. Carter, Corporation Counsel of the City of New York, and the attorney for defendants City of New York and Inspector Howard Redmond, Lieutenant Ralph Nieves, Detective Raymond Gerola, Detective Andrew Berkowitz, Police Officer Rafael Beato, Police Officer Yue Liu, Harold Miller, Pinny Ringel, and Rachel Atcheson in the above-referenced action. As set forth below, defendants write to respectfully request a pre-motion conference concerning defendants' proposed Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(b)(6) motion to dismiss *pro se* plaintiff Towaki Komatsu's claims as alleged in his August 30, 2018 second amended complaint. As such, defendants join in the briefing schedule proposed by Assistant Attorney General Monica Hanna on behalf of defendants Captain Manzi, Sergeant Brunner, and Officer Dominguez.

By way of background, *pro se* plaintiff brings this action, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983, alleging, *inter alia*, that during incidents that occurred on or about April 24, 2017, and May 23, 2017, plaintiff was subjected to denial of his First Amendment rights, assault and battery, violation of substantive and procedural due process of law, failure to intervene, and is further alleging municipal liability.

Pursuant to Rule 12(b)(6) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, a complaint may be dismissed "for failure of the pleading to state a claim upon which relief can be granted." (See F.R.C.P. 12(b)(6)). Additionally, the Second Circuit has held that a plaintiff must "provide grounds upon which his claim rests through factual allegations sufficient to raise a right to relief above the speculative level." (Goldstein v. Pataki, 516 F.3d 50,56 (2d Cir. 2008)). Furthermore, "the United States Supreme Court has made it abundantly clear that plaintiffs are not allowed to file complaints to 'find out the truth;' rather, they have to have some basis in fact for alleging that the 'truth' is what they believe it to be." (Bancroft v. City of Mt. Vernon, 672 F. Supp. 2d

SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, COUNTY OF NEW YORK

TOWAKI KOMATSU

INDEX NO.

100054/17

Plaintiff(s)

- against -

IAS PART

NYC HRA

Defendant(s)

STIPULATION

IT IS HEREBY STIPULATED AND AGREED by and between or among the attorneys named below as follows: after conference with the Court (RM)

the parties agree to adjourn to day's preliminary conference for plaintiff to determine if ~~the~~ the federal court will exercise jurisdiction over the state law claims in the instant action, and for defendant to respond to the complaint.

Preliminary conference adjourned ~~Nov 22/2018~~ to 3/20/2019

[Signature]
Attorney for Plaintiff(s)

For by [Signature]
Attorney for Defendant HRA

Attorney for Defendant

Attorney for Defendant

Dated:

SO ORDERED:

ENTER:

J.S.C.
HON. ALEXANDER M. TISCH

2/14/17

At an I.A.S. Part 52 of the Supreme Court of the State of New York, held in and for the County of New York, at the Courthouse, located at 80 Centre Street, Borough of New York, City and State of New York, on the 17th day of SEPTEMBER 2018

P R E S E N T:

HON. ALEXANDER M. TISCH, A.J.S.C.

TOWAKI KOMATSU,

ORDER

Plaintiff/Petitioner,

-against-

INDEX NO.:

NEW YORK CITY HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION,

100054/2017

Defendant/Respondent.

Hon. Alexander M. Tisch, A.J.S.C.:

Upon plaintiff's correspondence dated September 5–6, 2018 (annexed hereto), it was brought to this Court's attention that the decision and order resolving motion sequence no. 6 dated January 31, 2018 (Bannon, J.) inadvertently marked this case disposed. The matter should still be considered as active, given the Court's prior decision and order resolving motion sequence nos. 1–3 dated August 10, 2017 (Bannon, J.), which severed certain claims against the defendant and transferred the matter to a City Part. Namely, the causes of action in the petition/complaint alleging "that the respondent/defendant was negligent in the provision of security ; converted the petitioner's/plaintiff's property to its own use, and unlawfully precluded the petitioner/plaintiff from attending certain public meetings, and seek both damages and injunctive relief" (order dated August 10, 2017, pages 9–10).

Accordingly, it is hereby ORDERED that the matter is restored to active status; and it is further ORDERED that the parties are directed to appear for a preliminary conference in DCM, located in Room 103 of 80 Centre Street, on **December 12, 2018 at 2:00 PM.**

If Corporation Counsel for the City of New York is not representing the defendant, then the parties should notify chambers as soon as possible.

ENTER,



**HON. ALEXANDER M. TISCH
A.J.S.C.**

From: HRA Freedom of Information Law Office FOIL@hra.nyc.gov
Subject: RE: New FOIL demands
Date: July 5, 2018 at 4:50 PM
To: Towaki Komatsu towaki_komatsu@yahoo.com



FOIL #18-393

Re: FOIL Request – Security contracts, SUS contracts, Jericho contracts, and specified HRA communications with the NYC Public Advocate’s office

Dear Mr. Komatsu:

This letter acknowledges receipt of your Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request below, emailed June 27, 2018, seeking copies of Security contracts, SUS contracts, Jericho contracts, and specified HRA communications with the NYC Public Advocate’s office.

Please be advised that we are now in the process of determining the availability and/or releasability of the records you seek. However, due to the number of requests received by this office and the resulting volume of work, some delay could be expected in the processing of your request. Nonetheless, we now expect to be able to respond further regarding the availability of records responsive to your request on or before August 2, 2018.

Thank you for your inquiry.

Sincerely,
DSS FOIL Unit

From: Towaki Komatsu [mailto:towaki_komatsu@yahoo.com]
Sent: Wednesday, June 27, 2018 8:33 AM
To: HRA Freedom of Information Law Office
Subject: Re: New FOIL demands

This is Towaki Komatsu.

I’m sending you this message to submit a new FOIL demand.

Immediately provide me with the following:

1. All contracts that existed between HRA and FJC Security Services or whichever other vendor(s) that were responsible for providing security inside of HRA’s Bellevue men’s shelter located at East 30th Street for the period between October of 2015 and the present.

From: HRA Freedom of Information Law Office FOIL@hra.nyc.gov
Subject: RE: New FOIL request
Date: May 8, 2018 at 10:45 AM
To: Towaki Komatsu towaki_komatsu@yahoo.com

FOIL Request #18-282

Re: FOIL Request – Fair Hearing Records Info

Dear Towaki Komatsu:

This letter responds to your Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request made on May 7, 2018, in which you submitted the following questions regarding a change HRA personnel made to an apartment number associated with me on 2/18/16:

1. *What information did HRA have about where I resided **a)** immediately prior to 2/16/16 and **b)** immediately prior to HRA having made a change on 2/18/16 to an apartment number associated with me?*
2. *When HRA personnel made a change on 2/18/16 to information about an apartment number associated with me, what was the specific address that corresponded to the change that it made after it made that change?*
3. *Who directed HRA personnel to make this change on 2/18/16?*
4. *What sources of information did HRA use to make this change on 2/18/16?*
5. *Have the following members of HRA been aware of this change that was made on 2/18/16 and, if so, on which dates did they become aware of this change? HRA Commissioner Steven Banks, Jeffrey Mosczyk, Ann Marie Scalia, Marin Gerber, Martha Calhoun, and Jordan Dressler.*

The Department of Social Services/Human Resources Administration (“DSS/HRA”) is hereby denying your request. Please be advised that FOIL does not require an agency to prepare or create a record in response to a request for information. See Public Officers Law §89(3)(a). FOIL does not require an agency to supply information in response to questions.

However, as your questions pertain to records provided as part of your Fair Hearing evidence packet, your questions have been forwarded to the Fair Hearing Unit for review.

Should you choose to appeal this decision, please send your written appeal to HRA’s Appeal Officer, Martha Calhoun, Office of Legal Affairs, Human Resources Administration, 4 World Trade Cent, 150 Greenwich Street, 38th floor, New York, New York 10007, or by email at <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/hra/about/foil-request.page> within 30 days in accordance with POL Sec. 89(4)(a).

Sincerely,
DSS FOIL Unit

From: Towaki Komatsu [mailto:towaki_komatsu@yahoo.com]
Sent: Monday, May 07, 2018 12:21 PM
To: HRA Freedom of Information Law Office
Subject: Re: New FOIL request

HRA FOIL team,

This is Towaki Komatsu.

I am sending you this message to submit a new FOIL request for you to immediately complete.

Specifically, I demand to be provided with detailed information about precisely what change HRA personnel made to an apartment number associated with me on 2/18/16 that is reflected in the following screenshot that is from an evidence packet I received that is comprised of some of HRA's records about me. Furthermore, I demand to be immediately provided with detailed information about the basis for why HRA made this change to its records about me on 2/18/16. In other words, the following questions must be answered by HRA immediately:

1. What information did HRA have about where I resided **a)** immediately prior to 2/16/16 and **b)** immediately prior to HRA having made a change on 2/18/16 to an apartment number associated with me?
2. When HRA personnel made a change on 2/18/16 to information about an apartment number associated with me, what was the specific address that corresponded to the change that it made after it made that change?
3. Who directed HRA personnel to make this change on 2/18/16?
4. What sources of information did HRA use to make this change on 2/18/16?
5. Have the following members of HRA been aware of this change that was made on 2/18/16 and, if so, on which dates did they become aware of this change? HRA Commissioner Steven Banks, Jeffrey Mosczyk, Ann Marie Scalia, Marin Gerber, Martha Calhoun, and Jordan Dressler.

2/18/2016	Error Correction	Benjamin- Solis,K	Correction to Aptment numbe
-----------	---------------------	----------------------	-----------------------------

From,

Towaki Komatsu



POLICE DEPARTMENT
Commanding Officer
Bronx Investigations Unit
450 Cross Bronx Expressway
Bronx, NY 10457

March 26, 2018

Dear Mr. Komatsu

Your complaint made to this Bureau on 01/08/2018, Log #2018-1083, which related to an allegation(s) that occurred on 12/26/2017, involving a member(s) of the New York City Police Department was investigated by this unit.

Pertinent records were reviewed, necessary interviews and conferrals were held, and a full investigation into your allegation(s) was conducted.

Investigation revealed that the allegation(s) made against a member(s) of this Department is **PARTIALLY SUBSTANTIATED/SUBSTANTIATED**.

Complaints of misconduct and corruption are of a great and immediate concern to this Department. Your interest in this matter and reporting of this incident is greatly appreciated.

If you have any further questions concerning this investigation, you may contact this office at 718-299-4999.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Ortiz".

Steve Ortiz
Sergeant

New York State Unified Court System

WebCriminal

Case Details - Appearances

CASE INFORMATION

Court: **Bronx Criminal Court**
 Case #: **2017BX048917**
 Defendant: **Komatsu, Towaki M**

Date/Time	Judge/Part	Calendar Section	Arrestment/Hearing Type	Court Reporter	Outcome/Release Status
12/17/2018	AP3	PENDING	No Type		
11/01/2018	Stroth, L AP3	PENDING	No Type	Malinowski,	Case Continued (adjourned) RoR Continued
09/25/2018	Perry, P AP3	PENDING	No Type	Mercorella,	Case Continued (adjourned) RoR Continued
09/04/2018	Perry, P AP3	PENDING	No Type	Wilburn,	Case Continued (adjourned) RoR Continued
08/16/2018	Perry, P AP3	PENDING	No Type	Beiter,	Case Continued (adjourned) RoR Continued
06/06/2018	Perry, P AP3	PENDING	No Type	Lee, N	Case Continued (adjourned) RoR Continued
04/19/2018	Perry, P AP3	PENDING	No Type	Viti, D	Case Continued (adjourned) RoR Continued
02/20/2018	Whiten, M AP3	PENDING	No Type	Grammatica,	Case Continued (adjourned) RoR Continued
12/27/2017	Rosenblueth, J APAR3	PENDING	Pre-Arrestment Deposition Given	Herrera, R	Case Continued (adjourned) Released on Recognizance



TOWAKI KOMATSU RTCC SUMMARY



AIDED				
Date	Location	Precinct Number	Role	Aided Number
07/02/2016	[REDACTED]	048	Victim	[REDACTED]
08/08/2017	[REDACTED]	014	Victim	[REDACTED]
ARRESTS				
Date	Law Code	Sealed or Voided	Precinct	Arrest Number (Includes Check Digit)
12/26/2017	ASLT:POLICE OFF/FIREMAN/EMT RESISTING ARREST OBSTRUCT GOVERNMENTL ADMIN-2ND CRIMINAL TRESPASS-3RD	Voided	048	B17664729-Z
12/26/2017	RESISTING ARREST OBSTRUCT GOVERNMENTL ADMIN-2ND DIS/CON:FIGHT/VIOLENT BEHAVIOR HARASSMENT-2ND	NO	048	B17664760-K
CJA INTERVIEW				
Date	Charge	Precinct Number		
12/27/2017	RESIST ARREST OBS GOVT ADMN 2 DISORD CONDUCT HARASSMENT 2ND	048		



**TESTIMONY OF
THE FORTUNE SOCIETY**

**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE**
Council Chambers, City Hall, New York, NY

Monday, December 17, 2018

Presented by:
Barry Campbell, Special Assistant

The Fortune Society
29-76 Northern Blvd.
Long Island City, NY 11101
212-691-7554 (phone)

Good afternoon, my name is Barry Campbell and I am the Special Assistant to the Executive Team at The Fortune Society (Fortune). I would like to first start by thanking Chair Levin and members of the Committee. I am grateful for the opportunity to testify on behalf of The Fortune Society sharing our opinion and recommendations regarding Intro. 915.

For over half a century, Fortune has advocated for and provided an array of interventions and increasingly robust continuum of services to individuals impacted by the criminal justice system. The Fortune Society's mission is to support successful reentry from incarceration and promote alternatives to incarceration, thus strengthening the fabric of our communities. Our vision is to foster a world where people who are incarcerated or formerly incarcerated will thrive as positive, contributing members of society.

To address the complex and overlapping needs of our participants, The Fortune Society employs a holistic model of services to 7000 people with incarceration history each year. Our program was carefully designed to offer services with policies that give deference and special consideration to the unique histories, including the trauma caused by incarceration and lifetime abuse that our participants experienced.

The Mayor and the City Council clearly understand the benefit a safe, stable, and supportive place to live can have on a person's life, otherwise supportive housing would not be an integral part of the City's plan to end homelessness. We acknowledge the City's commitment to create 15,000 new units of supportive housing over the next 15 years, and applaud the Council's request to fast-track unit production from 500 to 700 units per year. Those units, however, would need to be included as part of the report created by Intro. 915.

While government agency transparency is important and necessary for the Council to make informed decisions, we believe that reporting on supportive housing in the context and manner required by this bill will spark confusion, misinformation, and hostility towards supportive housing that is unnecessary and avoidable. Specifically, Intro. 915 requires that DSS report on the number of number of shelters, single-site supportive housing facilities, scattered-site supportive housing units, and cluster sites in each council district and community board and make that information available to the Council, every community board, and the public.

First, the report requested via Intro. 915 asks the Department of Social Services (DSS) to generate a report on several different types of housing that vary as to length of stay, eligibility, intended purpose, target populations, services offered, etc. as if they were within the same comparison group. By the bill's own definition, a shelter is deemed temporary emergency housing, whereas every other type of housing referenced is defined as permanent and coupled with supportive services. If you are a homeless family, a single pregnant woman, or a single adult, you can apply to enter the shelter system. Runaway shelters are available to young people under 21 who are homeless or in crisis. A person is eligible for supportive housing if they are an individual or family who are considered chronically homeless and have a mental illness and/or a substance use disorder are eligible for supportive housing.

From the outset, this report would be aggregating people in temporary shelter situations with people in permanent housing with tenancy rights. This is not a direct comparison group and

serves only to further confuse lay citizens unfamiliar with the nature and purpose of supportive housing to insinuate in some manner that supportive housing is the graduated next step after a shelter, which at best is a mistake, and at worst furthers an already ill-informed stigma. Supportive housing tenants hold leases and pay about a third of their income in rent. In supportive housing buildings, on-site services are available such as: substance treatment, mental health, family counseling, and skill-building programs. The goal of this type of housing is to provide the resources necessary to ensure people don't return to homelessness. Residents are often people with mental health needs, substance treatment needs, or are living with chronic illnesses such as HIV or AIDS.

Second, community members often respond to news of shelter and supportive housing construction happening in their neighborhoods negatively, this opposition stemming from misinformation, stigma, and fear. "Siting" or "locational" conflicts occur when residents of a neighborhood attempt to protect against unwelcome developments, fearing that they will lower property values, threaten their safety and/or adversely affect neighborhood amenity.¹ In common language, this is referred to as the "Not in My Backyard" or "NIMBY" Syndrome. Given that one's home represents safety, it is no surprise that strong protectionist emotions and concerns will surface in opposition to any perceived threat to that safety. NIMBY opposition can take the form of protests, demonstrations, petition-writing, appeals to politicians, and in some cases court-room battles. NIMBY issues can shut down projects or significantly delay them, adding huge costs, or so sour the community-facility relations that eventual client well-being and program success are negatively affected.

The Fortune Society hopes that the spirit and intention of this bill was aimed at reporting for the sake of assessing and addressing the inequity and lack of access to temporary housing shelters that create pathways into permanent supportive housing, specifically in certain neighborhoods of opportunity that don't currently prioritize it. But we believe the unintended negative consequences of making this document available to the community boards and to the public online will do more harm than benefit. Singling out shelters and adding in supportive housing as types of housing that warrant separate census and reporting unnecessarily furthers the stigma associated with this innovative approach to community safety and ending homelessness. There is no reason to differentiate this housing type from other permanent affordable housing, or to make tenants with ongoing supportive needs living in these buildings feel uncomfortable in their own neighborhoods by putting a red flag on their locations.

Next, we fear that this report, with no other context, will lead some community boards and council districts to use it as evidence of filled social welfare quotas, declaring a prohibition on additional supportive housing. When in fact, supportive housing serves to benefit communities immensely by ending chronic homelessness, improving property values, and creating employment opportunities. Supportive housing residences also create deeply affordable housing in communities, as most residences set-aside 40% of units for low income individuals and families. At The Fortune Society, we have seen firsthand the impact that Castle Gardens (our affordable and permanent supportive housing building), has made on the Harlem area around 140th Street and are proud to be good neighbors offering services such as: weekly fresh

¹ Dear, M. (1992). "Understanding and Overcoming the NIMBY Syndrome." Journal of the American Planning Association, 58:3, 288-300.

vegetables, cooking demonstrations, community board meeting space, block parties, a polling site, and more, to our community.

The Council has expressed its unambiguous commitment to creating as much supportive housing as possible and doing so as quickly as possible in order to address New York City's affordable housing and homelessness crises. It follows then, the Council should do everything necessary to avoid any measure that would hinder development of supportive housing in the City. For these reasons, The Fortune Society asks that this Committee oppose Intro. 915. We hope that members of this Committee and the Council will continue to seek advice from non-profit agencies that operate supportive housing within marginalized communities to help our city meet the critical need for supportive housing in New York City, and make chronic homelessness a thing of the past.

In the event, however, that the Council decides to move forward with Intro. 915 against our recommendation, we ask that you consider several amendments before the bill is passed: (1) repeal the language releasing the report to community boards and making it available on DSS' website (2) generate separate reports for temporary shelter housing and permanent supportive housing as they should not be classified for comparison (3) add language to ensure that districts and community boards with the highest concentrations of these housing options cannot misuse this report to place a moratorium on additional shelters or supportive housing projects (4) add a sunset provision to terminate this reporting requirement in one year in case the information is being misused.

At The Fortune Society, we have learned that the processes of stabilization, ending cycles of homelessness, and maintaining recovery is not linear. Even clients who have graduated, done extraordinarily well, and anchored themselves in independent living, can experience obstacles that jeopardize their housing and their freedom. Fortune supports clients through counseling, treatment, and peer support interventions when they face barriers and setbacks in self-sufficiency, stability, and/or employability. Please do not let Intro. 915 become another watch list our clients are put on as they try to live happy and healthy lives in the community.

**Testimony to the
New York City Council
Committee on General Welfare
Submitted by ACMH, Inc.
December 17, 2018**

Good afternoon, Chair Levin and members of the Committee. My name is Daniel Johansson. I am the Chief Executive Officer of ACMH. On behalf of ACMH, thank you for the opportunity to testify before this Committee on Intro. 915.

ACMH is a not-for profit that for more than 40 years has developed, operated and provided supportive housing for persons with mental illness in New York City. We currently serve more than 1,500 individuals and families daily with affordable housing, supportive services and care coordination in Manhattan, Queens and the Bronx.

I do not believe that Intro 915 will advance the development of more supportive housing in NYC – housing that is permanent and affordable with on-site services. Supportive housing has proven to have a positive impact on neighborhoods: removing blight, improving security, offering employment and enhancing property values.

Though surely unintended, the posting of the number of supportive housing sites by council district and community board signals that supportive housing is bad for a community – it gives ammunition to the uninformed, misinformed, and fearful that supportive housing is something to be avoided, not encouraged.

As enlightened New Yorkers who care about reducing stigma and fighting for the underdog, why should we single out ~~for~~ housing that includes units for people who need and will get supportive services: the mentally ill, runaway youth, youth aging out of foster care or institutional settings, the homeless? We should be championing permanent housing with support, not calling it out.

I am more concerned frankly about the proliferation of housing that is unaffordable to most New Yorkers, let alone that doesn't include units tied to supportive services for the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

This bill will slow or stop supportive housing in districts that already have it and do nothing to promote it in districts that do not already have it.

For these reasons, we ask that you oppose Intro 915. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



Kelly Grace Price • co-creator, Close Rosie's • 534 w 187th st #7 New York, NY 10033
Phone: 646.676.1940 • E-Mail: gorgeous212@gmail.com
Web: <http://www.CloseRosies.org>

December 17, 2018

NYC Council Committee on General Welfare

To: Councilman Stephen Levin NYC Committee Chair Committee on General Welfare

To Councilwoman [Diana Ayala](#); Councilman [Mark Gjonaj](#); Councilman [Ritchie J. Torres](#); Councilwoman [Vanessa L. Gibson](#); Councilman [Rafael Salamanca Jr.](#); Councilman [Barry Grodenchik](#); Councilwoman [Adrienne E. Adams](#); Councilman [Antonio Reynoso](#); [Brad Lander](#); Councilman [Mark Treyger](#)

cc: Councilwoman Carlina Rivera; Councilman; Councilman Daniel Dromm; Councilwoman Alicka Ampry-Samuel; Commissioner Steven Banks, HRA General Counsel Molly Molloy.

via email: Alana Sivin, Associate General Counsel: NYC Committee on Criminal Justice

Ref: Oversight - Homeless Shelter Conditions Int 1232-2018, Int 1233-2018, Int 0884-2018

Dear Chair Levin, Committee Members and Committee Counsel(s):

I thank you for holding this hearing and also the other members of the council and staff for allowing me to appear today and speak. I am Kelly Grace Price and I ask you to listen to a story I haven't shared publically about a shelter for homeless women who are HIV positive that is adjacent to my home on w 187t Street behind the Yeshiva University Synagogue here in Manhattan. The address is 530 w 187th street. It is in councilman Rodriguez' district--# 12.

- I. **The "shelter" at 530 w 187th St., NY NY 10033 is in a building that is for sale; every time the building is shown to a prospective buyer all the residents are removed from the shelter to make occupancy look low resulting in sanctions being written unlawfully against the residents.**
 - Recently in August of this year all the residents but two were transferred out in a matter of days. All were accused of minor infractions such as: walking naked in the building (all the women share one single bathroom on each floor); hosting illegal

visitors; possessing alcohol in their rooms or smoking cigarettes in their rooms.

- The building is shown often as it has been for sale for years. Once or twice a year the women are written-up and cycled out; their belongings bagged up into garbage bags and thrown onto the curb by the building super usually with as little as 30 minutes notice. Sometimes the women call an ambulance to come get them. Sometimes they are able to gather their few belongings and scramble off to the HRA center to be relocated but often these scenarios play-out on evenings or weekends when the centers aren't open forcing these aging and needy women onto the street to hover like animals among their belongings. More than once I have taken these women in, stowed their belongings and walked them into the centers to help them find new housing.
- **The eviction process is arbitrary and capricious and there is no one helping these women understand their right to appeal the infraction that has triggered their eviction let alone anyone to help them relocate. The program staff is non-existent. Int 1232-2018, Int 1233-2018, Int 0884-2018 would all help to prevent these illegal population evacuations from sites that are masking as shelters but are really just human parking lots for landlords sitting on properties until they reach market ripeness.**

II. **The shelter's "building super" has been a series of abusive men who use and exploit the women in the house for sex and money.**

- The old super was ejected a year and a half ago. I was told by more than one of the residents that they had been awoken in the middle of the night by him in their room standing over their bed with his genitals exposed demanding oral sex or he would throw them out. I can give you the contacts of women who have experienced this off record if you care to investigate.
- Another man who is equally abusive replaced him. I have not heard the women who cycle in and out complain about any predatory sexual abuse by the new super but he sells drugs to the women and exploits them by purchasing their food stamps at half price when they ask him for drug money. So their small food allowance goes to him at a 50% discount.
- He also sells drugs to the residents and manages a full-fledged drug distribution ring out of the basement. One of the young neighborhood hoppers he has recruited to help him move his package lives in the studio apartment next to mine at 534 w 187th street.
- Earlier this fall on October 15, 2018 in the early morning the super of the shelter banging on my neighbor's door loudly, kicking and screaming, demanding to be let in awaked me. I peered through my peephole and watched as he set-about kicking

my neighbor's door in. When the door was almost off its hinges my neighbor opened the door and swung an object at the super in defense as he was charged. The super had a knife and sliced at his throat. I opened my door and screamed that everything was being recorded by my building's surveillance cameras overhead in the hallway. The two continued to struggle; blood spurted everywhere in the hallway. I've attached photos of the blood on the floor (**Exhibits 1 & 2**). Both men survived and scurried off.

- The next day the super threatened my life and warned me he would kill me if I reported the incident to the 34th pct. —which I did regardless—and nothing was done. No one even called me to follow up. Out of frustration I called Jeffrey Schlanger, the General Counsel to NYPD Commissioner O'Neill and asked for his help. I have not heard anything about this matter. There are no other caretakers for these women—they have home aides that come to tidy up and help with housework but there are nary any caseworkers that come around and none of the women are enrolled in any kind of program that I have heard of. Why are they left to be stewarded by this menacing person who is running a criminal enterprise out of the basement and allowed to exploit them unchecked?

III. My friend Evelyn (photo attached Exhibit 3) was sold a hot dose by the super of the facility or a member of his entourage earlier this fall and slipped into a coma. She was carried out in an ambulance; the last meal she ever cooked for herself was rice and beans. It was a Sunday evening in late August or early September. The next morning she was found unresponsive and mid-seizure alone in her room by the super; taken to the hospital and pronounced brain dead.

- There are cameras in the house—who sold her the hot dose?
- Why was anyone allowed to enter her apartment? Her neighbor heard a man's voice in her room that evening.
- Why wasn't an investigation done?
- Evelyn Harris was a beautiful woman from Alabama who dreamed of returning home one last time to reclaim the family farm she was raised on. She used to sit on my front porch drinking her morning coffee and tell me stories of how she was a smart, promising, little girl and excelled so much at academics her father agreed to send her to the local Hebrew School who accepted her on scholarship in the 1940s because of her prowess with language and storytelling.
- As an innocent person who has been raked over the coals by the criminal justice system my life has been one struggle after another as I journey to restore myself to the status I enjoyed before my false arrests, malicious prosecutions and unlawful imprisonment. I seek every day to find normalcy and regularity in a world of evil and darkness. Evelyn was my light. She made me laugh every day. I looked

forward to seeing her. We had planted a garden together in the flowerbed between our houses that was in memory of my last service dog, Sofie, who had to be put down last November. Evelyn held me as I sobbed when I came home from the vet that day. No one else was there for me. Evelyn will never go home to Alabama: I heard they pulled the plug on her life-support machine last month at the request of her daughter. But who will speak for Evelyn? Who will tell her story? Who will prevent more Evelyns from cycling out of that hellhole? The NYPD aren't helping?

IV. I have received wonderful treatment from Senior HRA Staff: Commissioner Banks I think remembers me from his days at the head of the Legal Aide when I was being maliciously prosecuted by Vance's ingénues and he personally had to sign subpoena requests for CCRB files regarding my case(s).

- I don't like complaining about his departments. But I have to say that the HRA centers are places where I have found security personnel to be overly interested in my personal details and those of other single young women who come to the centers seeking help.
- I've experienced all kinds of untoward advances by security staff—particularly when I have to go to new centers. There is a ring of pimps recruiting girls who have fallen onto hard times out of HRA centers.
- I watch the guards on Tinder scouting out girls who are in their proximity. I even watched one evening as a young girl appeared at the Dykman Center front door and handed a wad of cash to a security guard. I cannot say what was transpiring but it didn't look great.
- DOI needs to look into this. The guards have no right to inquire about my name or what business brings me into the centers nor do they have the right to ask any other woman or girl.

Thank you for taking the time to read my concerns about the shelter at 530 w 187th street and about security staff at HRA centers in general. We have to do better for our women and girls: allowing conditions that force us to continue a life of addiction and sexual conscription only feeds the pipeline to Rosie's on Rikers: we can do better for the women and girls of NYC.

Thank you,

Kelly Price

www.closerosies.org

EXHIBIT 1

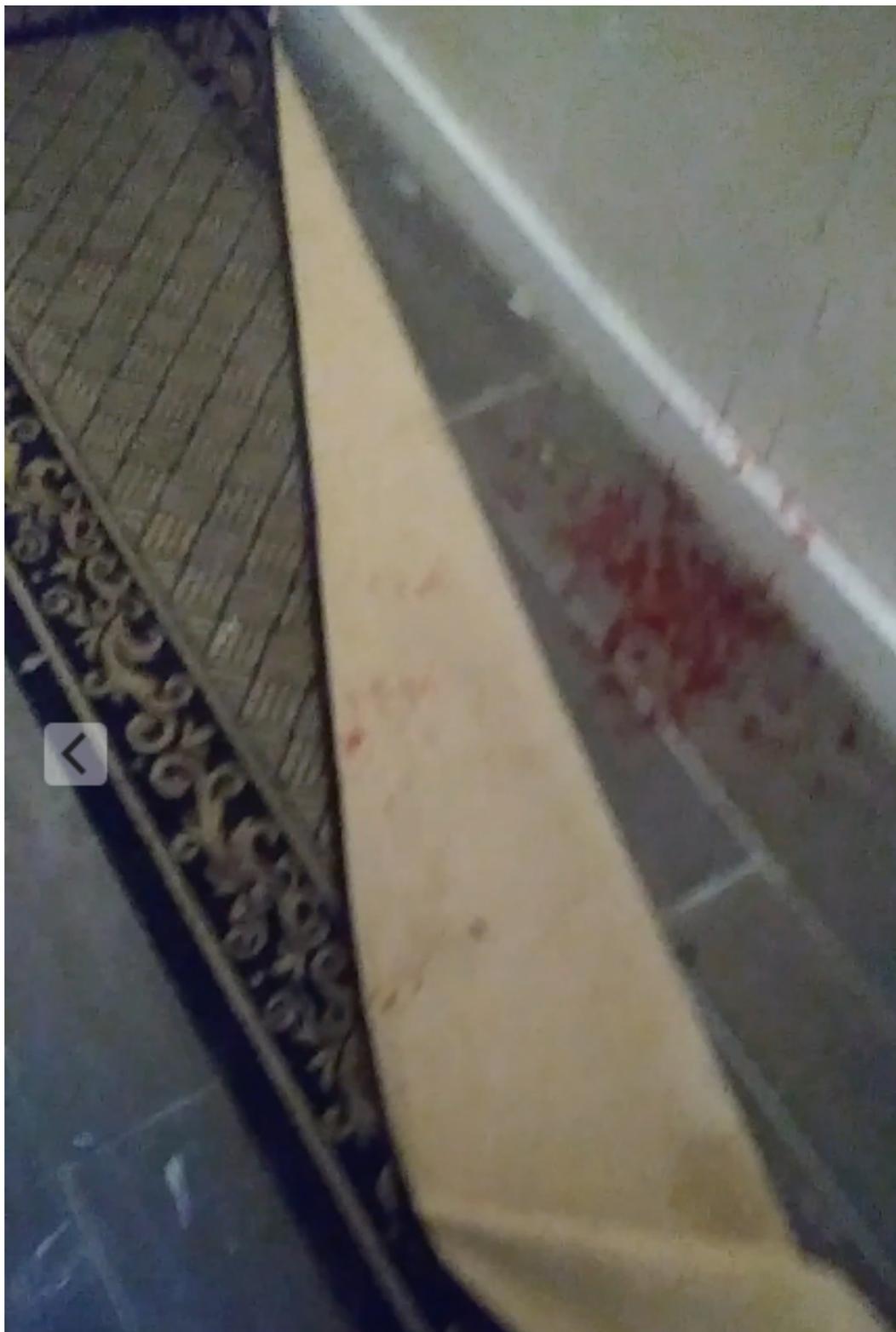


EXHIBIT 2



EXHIBIT 3



**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 915 Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 12/17/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Trish Marsick

Address: _____

I represent: SUS

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: Randi Levine

Address: _____

I represent: Advocates For Children

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 883, etc Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sasha Alexander

Address: _____

I represent: Sylvia Rivera Law Project

Address: 147 W 24th St 5th floor

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. T2018-3343 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12-17-18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Peter Malvan

Address: _____

I represent: NYC CoC and Safety Net Activists

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. T2018-3343 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Wendy O'Shields

Address: _____

I represent: Urban Justice Safety Net Activists

Address: 123 William Street NY, NY 10038

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. T2018-3343 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12-17-18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Unsigned

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: India Rodriguez
Address: 2611 pitkin ave apt 2R Brooklyn NY
I represent: The Sylvia Rivera Law project
Address: NY NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alga Rodriguez-Vidal
Address: SAFE horizon
I represent: _____
Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. All Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 12/17/2018

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Giselle Routhier + Beth Hofmeister
Address: _____
I represent: Coalition for the Homeless + The Legal Aid Society
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: 12/17/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jose A. Castillo, Sr.

Address: 1226 Flushing Ave Brooklyn NY

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 915 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/17/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Laura Mascuch

Address: _____

I represent: Supportive Housing Network of NY

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 915 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/17/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jim Dill

Address: _____

I represent: Housing & Services, Inc.

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. 915 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/17/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Brenda Rosen

Address: _____

I represent: Breaking Ground

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 915 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/17/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Raysa Rodriguez

Address: _____

I represent: Win

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 915 Res. No. 12/17/18

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Barry Campbell

Address: _____

I represent: Future Society

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. 915 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/17/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nicole McVinnia

Address: _____

I represent: Urban Pathways

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 915 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/17/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dan Johansson

Address: _____

I represent: ACMH

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 915 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/17/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Michelle DeMott

Address: _____

I represent: Samanitan Village

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. 1110 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/17/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jelaine Altino

Address: _____

I represent: NYC Coalition for DV Residential

Address: PROVIDERS

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 915 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/17/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: TRISH MARSIK

Address: 463 7th AVE 17th FLOOR, NYC

I represent: SERVICES for the UNDER SERVED

Address: 463 7th AVE 17th FLOOR, NYC

**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: 12/17/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Commissioner Steven Banks

Address: 4 WTC

I represent: NYC Department of Social Services

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: 12/17/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tawaki Komatsu

Address: _____

I represent: Self

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: Catherine Trapani

Address: _____

I represent: Homeless Services United

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: Talia Gruber

Address: _____

I represent: NYC Anti-violence Project

Address: 116 NASSAU ST. #11 10038

▶ 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: JENNIFER MARCH

Address: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I represent: Centers Committee for Children

Address: 14 W 4th Street

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