



Testimony of

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Before the

New York City Council
Committees on General Welfare and Housing and Buildings

Oversight Hearing:

Supportive Housing in New York City

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Good morning. My name is Chad H. Gholizadeh and I am the Senior Policy and Advocacy Associate for Economic and Housing Stability at Citizens' Committee for Children (CCC). CCC is a 73-year-old independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring every New York child is healthy, housed, educated and safe.

I would like to thank Chair Levin, Chair Williams, and the members of the Committees on General Welfare and Housing and Buildings for holding today's oversight hearing on supportive housing, and Breaking Ground for hosting this hearing at The Schermerhorn. There is no more appropriate place for this hearing to be held and we thank the Council for arranging for us to have this hearing in the community itself.

We are grateful for the Mayor and City Council's long-standing support for supportive housing and the development of additional units of supportive housing to help homeless New Yorkers secure permanent housing.

We know homelessness, housing and supportive housing needs are not challenges that the city can face alone. CCC is strongly urging the Governor and the State Legislature to sign the MOU and finally release the desperately needed \$1.97 billion in funding for supportive and affordable housing provided for in last year's state budget.

Background on Supportive Housing

Since the 1980s, supportive housing has been an important tool in the City's efforts to house chronically homeless New Yorker's who also struggle with issues such as mental illness and substance abuse.

Supportive housing combines affordable housing with supportive services to help people use housing as a platform for recovery following periods of homelessness, hospitalization, incarceration or for youth aging out of the foster care system.¹ Housing is permanent, tenants have leases, and they are responsible for paying rent. Importantly, the rent is affordable and tenants typically pay only 30% of their income on rent and utilities.² Supportive housing also provides on-site services for tenants as well as linkages to the community for additional resources. Supportive housing is funded by a blend of Federal, State and City dollars and buildings and programs are owned and administered by non-profit partners.³

The first New York/New York (NY/NY) Agreement was signed by Mayor Dinkins and Governor Mario Cuomo creating a groundbreaking City and State partnership to create 3,615 units of supportive housing for the mentally ill homeless in New York City. A second agreement was signed in 1999 creating an additional 1,500 units of supportive housing for homeless people suffering from mental illness.

¹ New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, *Supportive Housing*. Available at: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/mental/housing-services.shtml>

² The Supportive Housing Network of New York, *Elements of Supportive Housing*. Available at: <http://shnny.org/learn-more/what-is-supportive-housing/elements-of-supportive-housing/>

³ *Id.*

In 2005, NY/NY III was signed, which created an additional 9,000 units.⁴ For the first time, NY/NY III expanded eligibility for supportive housing to chronically and at-risk families, as well as youth existing the foster care system. Additionally, families and individuals facing other barriers to housing were allowed to apply and supportive housing became an affordable housing option for more than just mentally ill single adults.

Supportive housing has been proven to be a cost effective and efficient means to address homelessness. Placement in supportive housing reduces the use of costly emergency services such as shelters, emergency rooms and correctional facilities.⁵ An analysis by the City's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) found that NY/NY agreements reduced the use of shelters, hospitals, psychiatric centers and incarceration for an average savings of \$10,100 for every unit of supportive housing annually.⁶

While thousands of units of supportive housing were created under the previous NY/NY agreements, homelessness in New York City has recently reached a historic levels and the need for additional supportive housing units is dire. In fact, homelessness in New York City has reached levels not seen since the Great Depression. As of January 11, 2017, there were 13,017 families with over 23,000 children living in New York City shelters administered by the Department of Homeless Services (DHS).⁷ Families with children are also living in shelter for increasing long periods of time. The average length of stay in DHS shelters for families with children has grown from 375 days in Fiscal Year 2013 to 431 days in Fiscal Year 2016.⁸ **Shelter is not the ideal place for a child to grow up and increasing available supportive housing units for families would help many families be able to exit the shelter system.**

Recommendations

CCC is so pleased that the City has committed to creating 15,000 additional supportive housing units over the next 15 years. We hope this commitment is start of a concerted effort, in cooperation with the State, to ensure that New York City and New York State have the supportive housing units needed.

CCC respectfully submits the following recommendations:

- ***The State Legislature and the Governor must finalize and sign the MOU to release nearly \$2 billion in funding for the creation of affordable and supportive housing. City leaders must continue to pressure State leaders.***

CCC continues to call on the State Legislature and the Governor to come to an agreement on the nearly \$2 billion in funding for affordable and supportive housing, and to release those funds as soon as possible. CCC urges the Governor and the State Legislature to

⁴ The New York/NY III agreement expired in 2014.

⁵ The Supportive Housing Network of New York, *Funding the Solution to Homelessness: An Analysis of the New York/New York III Agreement*. Available at: <http://shnny.org/images/uploads/Funding-the-Solution-to-Homelessness.pdf>.

⁶ Campaign for New York/New York Housing, *What are the NY/NY Agreements*. Available at: <http://www.nynycampaign.org/what-are-the-nyny-agreements>

⁷ New York City Department of Homeless Services. Daily Report 1/12/17. <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dhs/downloads/pdf/dailyreport.pdf>. Accessed 1/13/17.

⁸ Fiscal 2016 Mayor's Management Report, Department of Homeless Services, p. 197. <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2016/dhs.pdf>. Accessed 1/13/17.

include 10,150 units for families and 1,500 units for youth in any state-wide supportive housing agreement.⁹ We appreciate the City Council's efforts to date and urge you to continue to push your State counterparts to expedite the release of these funds and the start of housing development.

- ***Ensure the new supportive housing units include sufficient units for families with children and youth aging out of foster care.***

The City's supportive housing recommendations include a call to create a vulnerability index to target the housing applicants most in need of supportive housing. Families with children are now 70% of the people living in DHS homeless shelters. In addition, youth aging out of foster care are struggling to maintain housing in the City. Unfortunately, under previous NY/NY agreements families and youth aging out of foster care were eligible for only a limited number of supportive housing units.

First, CCC urges the City to ensure that the roll-out of new units of supportive housing includes a significant number of new units for families and youth aging out of foster care.

In addition, CCC calls on the city to ensure that any vulnerability index takes into account the barriers to housing that all members of the family face, including the mental or developmental disabilities of a family's children and whether a family is involved in the child welfare system, in order to accurately assess their vulnerability. The Coordinated Assessment and Placement (CAPS) system currently being developed by the NYC CAPS Steering Committee would offer an opportunity to identify families who would benefit from supportive housing. This will ensure that the supply of affordable housing will truly be able to serve the families and individuals most in need.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

⁹ Campaign 4 NY/NY Housing, Platform, p.2 .
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/537e2643e4b0ef07d069369c/t/586ffb65197aea419f403822/1483733862578/Campaign+4+NY+NY+Housing+Platform+1-6-2017+342+names.pdf>. Accessed 1/17/17.