Testimony to the New York City Council
Committee on General Welfare
Oversight: State of Single Adult Homelessness in NYC
Submitted by the Supportive Housing Network of New York
December 6, 2021

The Supportive Housing Network of New York (the Network) appreciates the opportunity to testify on the state of single adult homelessness in New York City, a preventable crisis with unacceptable human consequences that is continuing to expand. The Network is a membership organization, representing over 200 nonprofits statewide who develop, own and operate supportive housing. Supportive housing is deeply affordable housing with onsite, voluntary social services for people who have experienced homelessness and who have the greatest barriers to obtaining and maintaining housing – those living with a serious mental health diagnoses, people who use substances, youth aging out of foster care, veterans, survivors of domestic violence and others.

There were 18,236 single adults sleeping in Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelters each night in September 2021, a staggering 97 percent more than a decade ago.[1] There is a much less accurate accounting of our community members sleeping on the street. Though the methodology is flawed, last year's Point in Time count identified 3,903 unsheltered adults in New York City.[2] Homelessness is a housing problem, a result of the fact that housing costs have increased beyond what individuals can afford to pay. Additional barriers to housing exist for people with disabilities, those with criminal legal system involvement, and those with rental vouchers as their source of income. Because of centuries of institutional racism, especially in the forms of housing segregation and redlining, and economic injustices, people living without housing are disproportionately Black and Latinx – 86 percent of single adults in DHS shelters in Fiscal Year 2021.[3] Additionally, an estimated 68 percent of single adults sleeping in DHS shelters have a disability.[4]

The lives of people experiencing homelessness are at risk. Multiple studies have documented the negative impact of homelessness on health and mortality rates. A 2019 study from Los Angeles found that the mortality rate for people experiencing homelessness was 2.3 times greater than the general population. The average age at death was 51 among people experiencing homeless and 73 among the general population.[5] New York City does not keep a public record of deaths of people without homes, but the nonprofits Care for the Homeless and Urban Pathways hold an annual Homeless Person's Memorial Day each year on the winter solstice. Members of the community send in names of people who have died. Each name is recited and many are eulogized. Names are still being collected for this

[1] https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/facts-about-homelessness/
[2] https://files.hudexchange.info/reports/published/CoC_PopSub_CoC_NY-600-2020_NY_2020.pdf
[3] https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dhs/downloads/pdf/dashboard/tables/FYTD21-DHS-Data-Dashboard-Data.pdf
[4] https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/StateOfTheHomeless2021.pdf
[5] http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/chie/reports/HomelessMortality_CHIEBrief_Final.pdf

year's memorial, but last year 346 lost lives were honored at the event.[6] [See Appendix]. As of February 2021, DHS reported that 113 individuals died of Covid-19, 101 sheltered individuals and 12 unsheltered. According to the Coalition for the Homeless and Charles Cleveland, PhD, of New York University, the cumulative New York City mortality rate due to Covid-19 was 292 deaths per 100,000 people. For sheltered homeless New Yorkers, it was 436 deaths per 100,000 people – 49 percent higher than the New York City rate.[7]

Furthermore, due to the strain and isolation of the Covid pandemic, mental health needs related to anxiety, depression, and suicide ideation have all increased, along with alcohol and substance use and worsening of chronic health conditions.[8]

SOLUTIONS

Supportive housing is uniquely positioned to comprehensively address the crises of homelessness, mental health, and substance use. It provides not only affordable housing where tenants pay no more than 30% of their income toward rent, but also voluntary and customized social services to help tenants stay in housing, meet their goals and reduce exposure to harm. While it is not the only solution for single adults experiencing homelessness, it is an important piece of the puzzle. Below are the Network's recommendations to expand and improve our supportive housing system in order to reduce single adult homelessness.

INVEST IN COORDINATED ACCESS AND PLACEMENT SYSTEM FOR HOUSING

New Yorkers without homes are often connected to a dizzying number of systems: hospitals, mental health, substance treatment, the criminal legal system, homeless services, children's services, youth and community development, education, public assistance, etc. At worst, people experiencing homelessness can get caught in a vicious cycle of institutionalization and criminalization, through which they are shuttled from shelter to the streets to jail to the hospital, increasing their trauma and reducing the likelihood of retaining the one thing that could interrupt this cycle – permanent housing with support services. In a better but still insufficient scenario, they may be interacting with a number of case managers across City agencies and their contracted nonprofits, who lack the access and coordinated resources to secure them appropriate permanent housing.

To meet HUD requirements to streamline entry to permanent housing from homelessness, New York City launched the Coordinated Assessment and Placement System (CAPS) in October 2020. CAPS is a web platform that contains an assessment survey for clients experiencing homelessness, NYC's supportive housing application, and a vacancy control system to manage supportive housing vacancies so referrals can be made. In order to fulfill a vision of true coordination —in which all relevant City and City-contracted employees can help a client determine what housing resources they qualify for and complete an application—the program needs additional financial resources to expand and better agency coordination to share data sets.

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[6] https://www.careforthehomeless.org/events/hpmd-2020/
[7] https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/age-adjusted-mortality-rate-for-sheltered-homeless-new-yorkers/
[8] Panchal, N, Kamal, R, Cox, C, Garfield, R. (2021). "The Implications of Covid-19 for Mental Health and Substance Use." KFF. https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/the-implications-of-covid-19-for-mental-health-and-substance-use/.

A recent survey conducted by the Network suggests that the vacancy rate in the existing supportive housing portfolio is 10%. This is unacceptable. As we work to create new housing opportunities, we need to simultaneously make sure that existing systems to refer and place people into permanent housing are functioning with maximal efficiency. This means reducing as many bureaucratic requirements under the City's control as possible, investing in the technological systems, and investing in the staff that manage these processes. Understaffing is a problem across City agencies and ensuring there are sufficient and qualified personnel to manage these processes at the Human Resources Administration (HRA) and Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) is essential. Any hiring freeze still in place over a position related to moving someone from homelessness into housing must be lifted immediately.

IMPROVE NYC 15/15 INITIATIVE

NYC 15/15 is New York City's commitment to creating 15,000 units of supportive housing in 15 years. Launched in 2016, the commitment is split evenly between single site residences and "scattered site" supportive housing (private apartments in which mobile services are delivered).

Despite many positive changes that came with NYC 15/15, the challenges of the scattered site model have persisted and pose a danger to the completion of the City's desperately needed program. While the separation of the rent and services budget lines was an improvement on older funding models, the rent lines continue to be well below the current Fair Market Rent (FMR), set by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) every year. Finding available apartments for the program is difficult, and those that can be rented are often far from transit, not accessible and/or need maintenance work. NYC 15/15 social service rates are also far below rates for single site residences: budgets are $10,000 for a single adult scattered site program, compared to $17,500 for a single adult congregate program. This is illogical because providing services in a scattered site setting is more labor intensive than in congregate: staff have to travel constantly around the city, manage relationships with landlords, and get to know community services in a variety of different neighborhoods.

While highly successful, the program could benefit from adjustments, including:

- Reallocating the 50/50 split between congregate and scattered site to a 75/25 split, respectively
- Increase scattered site contract rates to align each year with Fair Market Rents (FMR) and increase service dollars to match those of congregate housing.
- Continue to prioritize nonprofit development and lifetime ownership of supportive housing

PRESERVE AND CREATE 1,000 ADDITIONAL UNITS EACH YEAR

- **Preserve Existing Housing**
  There is an urgent need to preserve existing supportive housing. Of the 420 congregate residences in NYC, 160 are more than twenty years old. Many of these buildings were moderate rehabs of older buildings that need significant unit and building systems upgrades and need to be brought up to sustainability standards to meet the needs of our current climate crisis. The city must invest the resources necessary to preserve these units or risk losing them.

- **House Excluded Populations**
  NYC 15/15 is reserved for individuals and families that both cope with a disabling condition and who have been living in shelter or on the street for a year or more. This eligibility criteria

excludes people who, but for the long-term homelessness requirement, would be eligible for supportive housing including individuals recently released from jail or prison, survivors of domestic violence and those leaving long-term stays in hospitals. The City should expand its eligibility criteria to effectively meet the housing needs of the community with this additional 500-1,000 units a year.

MAXIMIZE USE OF PUBLIC SITES FOR SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Public sites are also a resource with tremendous untapped potential, especially in communities in which land prices are expensive. Because of the silo approach to housing and homelessness policy in New York City, many City agencies which have the skills and resources to contribute to the housing plan currently have no mandate to support it. While one of the greatest challenges to developing supportive housing is identifying affordable and appropriate land on which to build, only HPD, DHS, and Health and Hospitals (H+H) have examined their portfolios and allocated land to the cause.

Meanwhile, agencies such as FDNY, the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) all have potential sites that merit consideration for supportive housing development. A 2019 analysis of five public agencies' land found 66 sites primed for supportive housing development.[9]

SPEED AND COORDINATE DEVELOPMENT APPROVALS:

- **Revamp land use processes**
  Many supportive housing developments are significantly delayed by cumbersome land use and environmental review processes. The next administration should explore accelerating these processes for affordable and supportive housing. When a Uniform Land Use Review Process (ULURP) is necessary, the City should also focus on creating an aggressive timeline for the pre-certification process, the only step with no time target.
- **Prioritize affordable and supportive housing for project approvals**
  The City should create an Ombudsperson at City Hall to conduct interagency coordination to prioritize affordable and supportive housing in all necessary administrative approvals during development, particularly FDNY, Con Edison, DOT, DEP, and DOB approvals for construction, connections, and project closeout.

MODIFY THE ZONING RESOLUTION TO INCREASE DENSITY FOR ALL TYPES OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

A first step to ensuring affordable and supportive housing can be maximized equitably across the city is rationalizing zoning regulations. For example, currently, senior housing has an advantage compared to supportive and affordable housing via the Affordable Independent Residences for Seniors (AIRS) program. Modifying the Zoning Resolution to increase density for all types of affordable housing would make affordable and supportive housing more competitive with other uses and also accelerate the creation of much-needed homes.

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[9] Amin, A, Kaikai, J, McIntyre, A, Nguyen, C, Sauer, R. (2020) "Supportive Housing in New York City." Urban Design Forum. *https://urbandesignforum.org/proposals/supportive-housing-in-new-york-city/*

APPENDIX

Lives Lost, Individuals Recognized at 2020 Homeless Persons' Memorial Day

NB: The names below are people identified by the community as people experiencing homelessness who died in 2020. Their names were read at the 2020 Homeless Persons' Memorial Day, hosted by Care for the Homeless and Urban Pathways. https://www.careforthehomeless.org/events/hpmd-2020/

	LAST NAME	FIRST NAME
1		"Big Dog"
2		Abas
3		Abdul
4		Abelardo
5	Woomer	Adam
6	Perdomo	Adriel
7		Ahamed
8	Katard	Ahmed
9		Al
10	Borowik	Aleksander
11	Anuforo	Alex
12	Torres	Alex
13	Cooper	Alfonso
14		Alfonso
15		Alfred
16	Perez	Alfredo
17		Allen
18	Grant	Allen
19		Alonzo
20		Alphonso
21		Alvin
22	Carter	Alvin
23		Ana Maria
24	Garcia	Ana Maria
25		Anabella
26		Andre
27	Steadman	Andre
28	Williams	Andre
29		Andre
30		Andres
31		Andrew

32		Angel
33		Angel
34		Angel
35		Angela
36	G.	Angelo
37	Henry	Angie
38		Angle
39	Huguet	Anthony
40	Fordham	Anthony
41		Ariel
42	Abreu	Arlette
43	D.	Arnetia
44	Villalobo	Augustin
45	Ohebshalom	Avraham
46		Beatrice
47	Crown	Becky
48		Benson
49		Betty
50	Walker	Bobbie
51		Bobby
52		Brett
53	J.	Bruce
55	Willis	Calvin
56	Armenta	Carleen
57	Wallace	Carlitos
58	Miyares	Carlos
59		Casimiro
60	Randall	Cesar
61	Penman	Charles
62	Jones	Charles
63	M.	Charles
64		Charlotte
65	R.	Christina
67	Lavan	Christine
68	Canale	Christopher
69	Tsang	Chun-Ming
70	Cox	Coco
71	Washington	Colette
72		Columbus
73	Pagan	Confessor
74		Cory

76	Isaac	Craig
77		Dave
78		David
79	Hernandez	David
80	Krass	David
81	Bodrick	Dennis
82		Dereck
83	Holland	Derek
84		Diane
85		Diane
86		Dlosseni
87	Seidel	Donald
88	Frederick	Donna
89	Jenkins	Douglas
90	Hill	Dwayne
91	Brown	Dwayne
92		Edward
93		Eliseo
94		Elnora
95		Emmanuel
96		Enrique
97	Sharp	Eric
98		Ernst
99	Davis	Eugene
100		Eusebio
101	Perez	Eusebio
102	R.	F.
103		Felipe
105	Valentine	Felix
106	Bizzaro	Felix
107		Fiordaliza
108	Billips	Fitzgerald, AKA "Vuitton"
109		Francisca
110	Gonzalez	Francisco
111	Lopez	Francisco Sierra
112		Frank
113	Santore	Frank
114		Franklin
115		Frederick
117	Mendez	Gabriel

118	Jaman	Ganesh
119		Gary
120	A.	Genova
121		George
122	Smith	George
123		Georgianna
125	O'Neill	Gerard
126		Gerardo
127	McCallop	Gerry
128		Gilberto
129	R.	Gloria
130	Hale	Grace
131		Gregory
132	Floyd	Gregory
133	Raghubir	Harshram
135	Lee	Helena
137	Smallwood	Henry
138		Heriberto
139		Hiromitsu
140		Horace
141		Ignacio
142	Perez	Iliseo
143	Bellinger	Inez
144		Inez
145		Isac
146		Isaci
147	Vasquez	Ismail Mauricio
148	Ortiz	Israel
150		Jamal
151	Hamilton	James
154	Graham	James
155	Colon	Jason
156	Sacks	Jason
157		Jeffrey
158	Martinez	Jenny
159		Jeremy
160	Taylor	Jermaine
161	Cline	Jerome
162	Rubinstein	Jerome
163		Jerrel

164	McKenzie-Hamilton	Joe
165		Joel
168		John
169	Gugliotti	John
170	Royle	John
171	Sacco	John
172		John F.
173	Doe	John/Jane
174		Johnita
175	Williams	Jon
176	Williams	Jonathan
177	De Jesus	Jose
178	Rivera	Jose
179		Jose C.
180	Hernandez	Jose Guerrero
181	Perez	Juan
183	Jaquez	Juan
184	Martinez	Julie
185		Julio
186	L.	Justin
187	Jackson	Justine
189	Welch	Kareem
190		Kelly
191	Miller	Ken
192		Kennedy
193	Sermon	Kerri
194		Kitti
195		Kyley
196	Threats	Larry
197		Laura
198		Lavota
199	Taylor	Lawrence
200	Ward	Lennox
201		Leonard
202	Lara	Leonard
203		Leroy
204		Leroy
205		Leroy J.
206		Lillian
207		Lisa

208	Jenkins	Liyam and Liyah
209	Murray	Lonnie
210		Lorenzo
211	E.	Lori
212		Lucious
213	Bennett	Lynwood
214		Marcella
215	Smith	Marianne
216	Stevenson	Mark
217	Staniszewski	Martin
218		Martires
219	Thomas	Marvin
220		Mayra
223		Michael
224		Michael
225		Michael
226		Michael
227		Michael
228	Chisholm	Michael
229	Ligotino	Michael
230	Lamons	Michael
231	Caquias	Michael
232	Hernandez	Michael
233	Ellis	Michelle Pierre
234	Sanchez	Miguel
235		Mo
236		Mo
237		Montgomery
238	Hukill	Monty
239		Mudaba
240		Muhammad
241		Najib
242	Washington	Nancy
243		Nathaniel
244	Stryker	Nelson
245	DeLuca	Nicolas DeLuca
246		Nihal
247	Crooks	Norma
248	Armstrong	Nyhunta
249		Olivo
250	Cuevas	Orlando

251	Drame	Ousmane
252		Pam
253		Patricia
255		Paul
256	Webb	Paul
257	Monasterio	Paul
258		Pedro
259		Philip
260		Phillip
262		Prince
263		Quinton
264		Rafael
266	Moreno	Rafael
267		Raphael
268		Raul
269		Relan
271	Winslow	Renee
272	Nicdao	Reynaldo
273		Richard
274	Solano	Rigoberto
275	Mongual	Robert
278	Johnson	Robert
279	O.	Robert
280	V.	Robert
281	Glaner	Robert
282	Foley	Ronald
283	Jacques	Ronald
284		Rosa
285		Ruben
286		Rudolph
287	Mackie	Russell
288	Maggio	Ryan
289		Sade
290		Sal
291		Sandra
292	Samaroo	Sarojini
293	Reilly	Sean
294	Abesha	Selam "Roman"
295		Sergio
296	Gutierrez	Sergio
297	Alsayidi	Sharafeldi

298		Sid
299		Sophia
300		Sophia
301	Visconti	Stacy
302		Stanley
303	B.	Stanley
304	Trimble	Stephen
305	Kehoe	Steven
306	N.	Steven
307		Survelia
309	Ortiz	Susana
310	Walz	Suzanne
311	Becton	Tarsha
312		Theresa
314	Jones	Theresa
315		Tira
317		Tito
318		Todd
319		Trevor
320		Ulysses
321		Val
323	Griffin	Verna
324	D.E.	Veteran
325		Vicente
326		Victor
328	Gonzalez	Victor
329	C.	Victor
330	O.	Villain
332		Villian
334	Olivo	Villian
336	Lobb	Vincent
337	Olivo	Vivian
338	Tatarinovich	Vladimir
339	Tate	Wade
340		William
341		William
342		Williams
343		Winston
344		Yakov
346	Biasochea	Yolanda