



**Testimony of
Supportive Housing Network of New York
For the New York City Council's Committee on General Welfare Hearing on
Proposed Resolution 123-A
March 26, 2014**

Good morning Chair Levin and members of the General Welfare Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to testify. My name is Johanna Walczyk and I am here today testifying on behalf of the Supportive Housing Network of New York. We strongly support Resolution 123 and want to thank you for making this a priority.

The Supportive Housing Network is a statewide nonprofit membership organization representing over 220 nonprofits that develop and operate supportive housing, affordable housing linked to on-site social services that help formerly homeless, disabled and at-risk individuals and families become, and remain, stably housed.

Since its inception in the 1980s, supportive housing has become one of the most effective - and cost-efficient - interventions ever devised to end homelessness among the most vulnerable, including individuals and families coping with mental illness, trauma/abuse, addiction, chronic illness and most recently, youth who have aged out of foster care.

Supportive housing is also at a crossroads with the NY/NY III initiative ending next year – the city's main vehicle for providing funding for supportive housing, but unlike this rental subsidy crisis, there isn't a legal restriction keeping the City and State from negotiating a new program.

And supportive housing should not be the only solution to homelessness; many of our 60,000 homeless men, women and children simply cannot make ends meet in a city where, according to the National Low Income Housing Coalition's 2014 Out of Reach Report, the average wage needed to afford a two bedroom apartment is \$25 an hour.¹ For them they just need a rental subsidy that can make up the difference between their low wages and high rent.

¹ 60,000 includes census data from the city's five shelter systems – HPD, DHS, DYCD, HRA and HASA, plus the most recent street homeless count.

City Council Resolution 123 rightly calls on the State to sign a budget that once again allows the city to use state funding to create a local rental assistance program. And if as we all hope, the state lifts this restriction, then we urge the General Welfare Committee to begin work with the Administration immediately to ensure that we fund and implement a new program as soon as possible. We also ask that the Committee and Administration work with the providers and advocates that have experience with rental subsidies to shape this new and improved program. Many of us testifying today have done extensive research on local rental subsidy programs here and across the country and hope to help make this program a successful one.

Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Johanna Walczyk
Supportive Housing Network of New York
247 West 37th Street, 18th Floor
New York, New York 10018
jwalczyk@shnny.org
646-619-9650