Good afternoon to the Council. I hope that you and your families are well during this extremely trying time. On behalf of the Supportive Housing Network of New York, we are grateful for the opportunity to submit testimony on the Capital Budget.

The Supportive Housing Network of New York is a membership organization representing over 200 nonprofit developers and operators of supportive housing statewide. Supportive housing is permanent affordable housing with embedded social services for vulnerable individuals and families, people who are homeless and living with disabilities and/or other barriers to maintaining stable housing. Thousands of New Yorkers who live with mental illness, substance use disorders, and HIV/AIDS rely on supportive housing. Supportive housing providers have been on the frontline of the COVID crisis, caring for our most vulnerable neighbors, delivering essential services and stepping up amidst this unprecedented crisis.

We recognize the uphill battle of recovery, from an economic perspective, and most importantly from a public health perspective. However, it is clear that our road to recovery must prioritize supportive and affordable housing, and the crucial social services provided therein.

The Council has indicated its unambiguous support for the creation of as much supportive and affordable housing as possible, and as quickly as possible, in order to address New York City’s housing and homelessness crises. **With almost 200,000 New Yorkers out of work[[1]](#footnote-1), the homelessness crisis is certain to exacerbate. Now is the time to double down on the City’s efforts to build and preserve supportive housing. We must move chronically homeless New Yorkers out of shelter and into supportive housing in order to relieve a system that is already strained and likely to become more so.**

**According to our records, the Supportive Housing Loan Program at HPD was on track to close 943 units in the remainder of FY20, 569 of which are supportive, and potentially 1,582 units in FY21, 862 of which are supportive. An additional 434 units are in the pipeline in HPD’s ELLA and SARA programs.**

**As state budget cuts loom and federal support remains uncertain, the 40% cut to the capital budget in FY 20 and the 38% cut to the capital budget in FY 21 comes as another blow. Pushing out closing dates for these projects means more people sitting in shelters or on the streets. The City must use every available tool to ensure the full funding of the Supportive Housing Loan Program and other critical HPD programs that create more housing for homeless New Yorkers**. If the city follows through with cuts to the capital budget, it will put these deals in jeopardy and slow if not reverse the progress the city has made over the last few years.

As this administration struggles to move people experiencing homelessness out of the shelter system, street and subways, spending millions of dollars to keep New Yorkers safe by providing them with adequate space to shelter in place, we must all agree on something: **housing is healthcare, and a safe, stable and affordable place to call home is the first line of defense in protecting vulnerable communities**. **Without a continued, significant investment in the development of housing for homeless New Yorkers, and those who will inevitably become homeless, the city will see all of its efforts to decrease the shelter and street homeless population fail and risk future spikes of COVID fatalities.**

**As we reimagine the future of New York City and its economy, the council must plan for the long-term. Development of supportive housing not only provides crucial stability for those exiting shelter and street homelessness, it creates jobs. From construction to property management to service provision, the supportive housing community employs tens of thousands of New Yorkers. Clinicians, social workers, supers, porters, security, education navigators, peer specialists, and more… these jobs are, and will be critical to recovery for our economy and our community.**

Supportive housing is effective not only because of its deep affordability and mission-based ownership, but because of the embedded social services and the essential workers providing those services. During this crisis, the supportive housing community has adapted rapidly, developing innovative ways to deliver essential services, and keep their clients safe. Our frontline workers, including social workers, building service workers, and security staff in our residences are maintaining the highest levels of sanitation, encouraging social distancing practices, and providing crucial care to residents impacted by COVID-19, while also maintaining their normal case management services, connecting clients to services and helping them navigate during this time.

Not only is it imperative the city and the administration preserve the capital budget for these programs, we must preserve and enhance the social services within these residences to ensure the safety and stability of our neighbors.

We thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today and are available for any questions you may have.

1. <https://www.syracuse.com/coronavirus/2020/04/coronavirus-in-ny-how-many-people-have-applied-for-unemployment-by-region-chart.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)