



### Testimony to NYC Council

Committee on General Welfare, Housing and Buildings, Mental Health & Veterans

Oversight Hearing on Supportive Housing

Submitted by Supportive Housing Network of NY

Thursday, December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023

My name is Joelle Ballam-Schwan and I'm with the Supportive Housing Network of New York, a membership and advocacy organization representing the developers and operators of supportive housing.

We join nonprofits across the board in urging the City Council to oppose Mayor Adams' hiring freeze and the remaining 10% of the 15% PEGS. These cuts will have a disastrous impact on the city's supportive housing system and the already strained agencies charged with overseeing mental health and housing programs and projects, delaying development timelines and putting housing opportunities and services for New Yorkers in need out of reach. Critical housing and homelessness-related agencies – including HPD, DHS, HRA, DOB, DCP, and DOHMH – must be insulated from PEGS.

The city must also keep the promise of its NYC 15/15 initiative and reallocate the thousands of currently unawarded units. NYC 15/15, a promise to create 15,000 units of supportive housing over 15 years, envisioned an even split between new development of congregate, single-site residences, and scattered site units. Due to many difficulties with the scattered site model, including underfunding and low-quality apartments, eight years into NYC 15/15, only 17% of scattered site contracts have been awarded versus 80% of congregate awards, leaving 6,220 unawarded units untapped for homeless households. On top of this, infrastructure of first-generation supportive housing is crumbling and in dire need of preservation.

For the City to see NYC 15/15 through while ensuring we don't lose a single existing unit, it must rethink the original plan and adopt the Supportive Housing Network of New York's reallocation plan, and:

- Reallocate a majority of the unawarded scattered site units into: more congregate supportive housing, preservation of first-generation supportive housing, and affordable housing overlay units, prioritizing congregate depending on the fiscal opportunity of the City.
- Launch a new Supportive Housing Preservation program that merges capital subsidies with NYC 15/15 service and operating subsidies.
- Enhance and align all service and operating rates to ensure tenants receive consistent service levels and providers have uniform contracted rates, irrespective of housing type.

Additionally, post-pandemic, with the crisis of mental health, the proliferation of more addictive and deadly drugs, overstretched staff and underfunded models, our community has been pushed to the brink. We urge the City to work to address unmet service needs in supportive housing and invest in the supportive housing workforce, including increasing wages and incentives and #JustPaying our human services workforce and funding an annual COLA.



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Last but not least, we call on the City to expand supportive housing opportunities for those leaving jail/prison by improving the Justice Involved Supportive Housing program (JISH) and revising the definition of chronic homelessness to allow stays in jail or prison over 90 days to count as homeless time, to account for those currently left out of NYC 15/15 eligibility.

The city should also interrogate ways to ensure that supportive housing options are available for survivors of domestic violence.

Thank you so much for this opportunity to testify.