



Testimony to the NYC Council

Committee on Housing and Buildings

FY26 Preliminary Budget Hearing

Tuesday, March 25, 2025

Submitted on Behalf of the Supportive Housing Network of NY

Good afternoon Chair Sanchez and members of the Committee. My name is Kenny Margarito Alvarez. I am a United States Marine Corps Veteran. And I served during the War On Terrorism from 2003 to 2008. I'm also a Supportive Housing Advocate in partnership with the Supportive Housing Network of New York. We're asking New York City to keep its commitment to building 15,000 units in 15 years.

I entered supportive housing in 2013 after moving back to New York and finding myself in crisis after crisis, entering the HASA program and acquiring emergency housing assistance. I was chronically homeless for 16 months in New York City, and longer in the months prior in other states, faced with steep odds and unimaginable challenges like abusive relationships, chronic health conditions, and a lifestyle involving heavy self-medication. Along the way, A Better Place, run by The Doe Fund, quite literally became available to me. It was the first step to anything resembling recovery. Yolanda Jones was a Program Director there. At the financially strapped facility, she and the ever-changing team became the lynchpin to my survival during my time in Supportive Housing.

Before that, my experience in the series of New York City single-room occupancy hotels was a horrifying mix of squalor, merciless staff and drug-related murder. Supportive Housing saved my life and slowly showed me there was a life worth saving in the first place. Thanks to the amazing social workers at ACQC in the Jamaica YMCA, it was the last place I stayed before entering the Supportive Housing system. Once in, I went back to school and completed my Masters. The level of spiritual encouragement and clarity I needed to get out of that abusive relationship toward salvation can't be overstated. Supportive Housing got me the redemption so many others seek. Now supportive housing and the people that make it work need support.

So we ask the City Council to ensure that the **NYC 15/15 supportive housing initiative is fully funded** and implemented so that every available unit can be developed or preserved. That means investing **\$307 million** to build and preserve more housing and **\$72.6 million** to ensure service and rent subsidies continue for both new and existing units.

Some supportive housing tenants were deeper in street life than I was. Some are also teetering the balance between making it and not making it. Now more than ever is the time to do everything we can to keep giving people the safe haven they deserve and the dignity to start over and move forward. Thank you for your time and consideration.