



## Network Remarks

June 1, 2020

Thank you CM Lander, Gibson and Cornegy

While we appreciate the dire financial straits the city finds itself in, we also know that the road to recovery must prioritize addressing homelessness and housing. This is not only because we are about to experience a tsunami of homelessness on top of what was already a crisis, and not just because the costs of that homelessness will be exponentially greater than the cost of housing, but because, like the murder of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and countless others, homelessness is yet another indicator of systemic racism. The vast majority of homeless people and those eligible for supportive housing are people of color. It's been said, if you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem. Affordable and supportive housing are part of the solution. Cuts to capital funding to build that housing – especially now -- are part of the problem.

New York City had a homelessness crisis well before the pandemic; now, with unemployment at astronomical levels, the city is facing what the Times called an avalanche of evictions. Again, those impacted will disproportionately be people of color. If we seek to right the ship of racism there has never been a more important time to invest in deeply affordable housing – and, for homeless households coping with additional issues – supportive housing.

It is heartbreaking, therefore, to see the proposed cuts to HPD's capital budget. There were 2500 units of supportive and affordable housing set to close this year and next with another nearly 500 units included in senior and affordable projects. That's 3000 homes for the most vulnerable individuals and families that won't even begin to be built.

Our black and brown communities have been decimated by COVID – both in COVID-related death and illness as well as horrific rates of unemployment. Supportive and affordable housing not only creates homes, its development and operation creates jobs: jobs that are desperately needed right now and jobs that would be majority filled by people of color.

The damage these cuts will do to the future creation of supportive housing is also inestimable: First, the complex financing behind the 3000 apartments in the pipeline will likely be years in rebuilding. And the critical private sector investor confidence – so carefully nurtured over the past two decades – will take even longer to resuscitate.

Lastly, and most importantly anyone who doubted that 'housing is healthcare' need only look at the horrific death toll among homeless New Yorkers, again over-represented by people of color, especially men. In the case of the pandemic, housing wasn't just healthcare, it literally saved lives.



---

New York needs to rebuild on a number of levels – but it also needs to rebuild its social contract with people of color, which has been violated again and again. We need to invest in things that are part of the solution... affordable and supportive housing.

Thank you!