



**Testimony to NYC Council**

Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities and Addiction

Mental Health Roadmap Hearing

Submitted by Supportive Housing Network of NY

May 4, 2023

Hello Chair Lee, and members of the New York City Council Mental Health, Disabilities and Addiction Committee. My name is Joelle Ballam-Schwan, and I am the Associate Director of Engagement and Communications at the Supportive Housing Network of NY. The Network is a statewide membership organization representing the nonprofit developers and operators of supportive housing, a proven affordable housing model with wraparound support services for individuals and families with a history of homelessness who face additional barriers to obtaining and maintaining housing on their own.

The Network would like to thank Speaker Adrienne Adams, Mental Health Committee Chair Linda Lee, Majority Leader Keith Powers, and the entire City Council for putting forward a holistic Mental Health Roadmap that calls for targeted investments in the historically underfunded mental health infrastructure and addresses the workforce crisis. This plan could not come at a more critical time. Fueled by years of neglect and historic underfunding across the mental health continuum and compounded by a global pandemic, New York's mental health and substance use challenges have reached crisis levels.

The Network would like to commend the Council for the following specific advocacy items in the roadmap regarding the City's FY24 budget: advocating for an additional \$45 million for NYC 15/15, to meet the funding need for the plan's remaining supportive housing units, \$12.8 million for funding for Justice-Involved Supportive Housing, as well as adequate funding for the expansion of DOHMH's Intensive Mobile Treatment Teams. All are desperately needed to further New York City's supportive housing, expand opportunities for those exiting incarceration, and serve New Yorkers with acute mental health needs.

We also want to thank the Council for including the need to reallocate NYC 15/15 in order to meet its production goals. 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 rented on the private market with mobile case management services. Due to many difficulties with the scattered site model, seven years into NYC 15/15, only 17% of scattered site contracts have been awarded versus 70% of congregate awards. After further analysis by the Network, we urge the City to reallocate the remaining unawarded 6,295 scattered site units equally among following models:

1. Preservation of older congregate residences with little or no service funding. The City should dedicate a flexible preservation fund for services and operating, to pair with capital resources.
2. Traditional congregate sites, with nonprofits applying through normal channels via HPD and HRA.
3. Enhanced traditional scattered sites, with a service rate of \$17,500 per unit, which matches congregate service rates.

4. Enhanced non-traditional scattered sites in city-funded affordable housing residences, with a service rate of \$17,500 per unit, which matches congregate service rates.

The roadmap includes material solutions for addressing the shrinking workforce whose members deserve to be fully and fairly compensated for their critical work, such as Council Member Joseph's Resolution 0583. Missing from the roadmap, however, is the enormous cry from the entire human services sector for a COLA of at least 6.5%. Low and non-competitive wages, insufficient reimbursement of services, unreasonable staffing models and supervision options, and lack of meaningful support for staff who encounter trauma all contribute to an acute labor crisis. We appreciate the many ways this roadmap acknowledges this, but we need to push things further to achieve #JustPay and fund the COLA.

Additionally, we want to thank Council Majority Powers for the focus on City and state coordination to increase supporting housing development and contracting with Resolution 0588. We look forward to working with the Council Member on strategies to ensure City and State coordination and hold each entity accountable to completing their goals.

As members of the Correct Crisis Intervention Today Coalition (CCIT-NYC) advocating for a non-police peer-led mental health crisis response, we want to thank the council for the commitment to hold an oversight hearing on the B-HEARD program to address the significant challenges and concerns with the ways the program is currently being implemented, with well over 80% of responses still being handled by police. The City should allocate \$190 million to fund the model proposed by CCIT-NYC— which is peer-led, operates 24/7, utilizes a number other than 911 like 988, has independent emergency medical technicians, fast response times, is community operated and culturally response, none-of which are represented in B-HEARD.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify and we look forward to partnering with the Council to build upon this plan, with the goal of implementing a thoughtful and responsive framework to advance mental health and safety in New York City.