

Good afternoon to the chair and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak about an issue that frankly saved my life, Supportive Housing. I'm Victor Lee Walker, and I've been a resident of supportive housing through Jericho Project since 2017.

I was born in Detroit, where I lived for 40 years. As a 10-year-old child, it had been a dream to move to New York and perform on Broadway. I'm proud to say the film *Muppets Take Manhattan* was my introduction to this great city.

However, I don't have too tell you how tough it is living in New York. Everything is expensive, food, transportation, housing. Were it not for the lifeline of supportive housing, I would not be able to thrive the way I have. Supportive housing provided me with more than a stable place to live. It gave me the confidence and freedom to change the trajectory of my life.

I struggle with multiple disabilities. Without having to worry about my living situation, I was able to focus on my mental and physical health. I was diagnosed with Bipolar II Disorder two years ago. I'm a stroke survivor, and I have end stage kidney disease for which I am currently receiving dialysis.

Stable housing has allowed me to keep up with all of my doctor appointments and improve the quality of my life. Supportive Housing literally saves my life every day.

But, don't pity me. With all the health challenges I have, there are some amazing things happening in my life despite them. I am happy to say that my mental health is stable, I have a community of friends and family who love and support me, and in January of this year, I returned to college after being out for 17 years. At age 49, I'm a student at Lehman College, studying Africana Studies. In fact, I am missing class right now because speaking on this issue is so important to me. I'm an excellent student, and I'm so proud of myself. I'm grateful for organizations like Jericho Project and the Supportive Housing Network.

I'm here today, to make a path for the thousands of New Yorkers who want the opportunity to improve their lives by encouraging you to protect and expand funding for supportive housing. Reallocating funding for the NYC 15/15 supportive housing initiative would allow for more mental health services, employment services, and case managers who are directly responsible for guiding me through my achievements.

The funding would allow the non-profit organizations who fight every day for people like me to be paid on time and impact more lives. You on this committee hold that key!

I haven't made it to Broadway, yet, but someday, I will, and I will be able to thank all of you for continuing to fund supportive housing and making my dream of living in the greatest city in the world a reality. Thank you.