

Testimony from Will Woods  
Committee on Housing and Buildings  
Council Member Pierina Sanchez, Chair  
Tuesday, March 25, 2025

Good afternoon, my name is Will Woods, I am a consumer advocate. I am proud to call supportive housing, namely, Urban Pathways Residence at Halletts Cove my home.

Having a stable home gave me the opportunity to be the advocate I am today. I speak to you today, often to your colleagues in Albany and Washington D.C. and campaign for others to have stability and support I have received. As well as fight at every opportunity for the appropriate pay for every worker in this sector, the needed funding to preserve and extend supportive housing, and ensure that organizations doing the hard work are compensated in a timely fashion.

I freely give my time, energy, and voice because I believe the on-site support and sense of community have made all the difference. To quote the common refrain, supportive housing saved my life. I'm so lucky to know I can count on everyone on my support team, be it my case manager, program director or other on-site staff, our wellness program, to honestly senior staff - are invested in helping me be the best version of myself on a daily basis. They make it their business, and I love them for it.

Sadly, the pipeline to rehabilitation for those who have experienced homelessness is clogged, congested, and otherwise backed in a myriad of ways. As a result, literally thousands of my fellow New Yorkers are still waiting for the same opportunity I was given. We need to protect and expand supportive housing so more people can have this chance.

- We are asking the City Council to ensure that **NYC 15/15 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.

Frankly, the City is a bad business partner. As I have mentioned in previous testimony - it is incredibly frustrating to be in need, have said need acknowledged - and still need to beg for assistance. Supportive housing providers in good faith with their partners. They should be treated as partners, not afterthoughts.

- Supportive housing providers work tirelessly to keep people housed, but right now, many are waiting on overdue payments from the City. Without funding, they can't do their jobs.
- We need the Council to hold the administration accountable for paying providers on time so they can continue delivering the services that make supportive housing work.

Living in a supportive housing community for seven years, I can confidently say they we as neighbors often are aware and are sensitive to the tendencies, habits, triggers, and stories of our brothers and sisters. I know from personal experience that I have little trust or confidence in anyone wearing a badge. Many folks living in supportive housing have poor experiences with authority or have been previously incarcerated. I knew Jordan Neely. Not well, but enough that we recognized each other. I often wonder if he would be alive were I on his train that day.

- Supportive housing helps people build stability, but sometimes crises happen. When they do, we need the right response.

- That's why B-HEARD is so important—it sends trained social workers and an EMT instead of police, to help people in mental health crises.
- Expanding B-HEARD and ensuring it has well-paid peer responders is critical. We ask the Council to baseline \$4.5 million in funding to strengthen this program.

We, as lived experience advocates, as well as the providers and organizations we choose to support are here for you as a resource. We are the subject matter experts, the consultants to bring in to ask and advise. We work with wonderfully giving, motivated, passionate people. Especially given our current climate, I challenge you - help us, fund us, support us, match word to action- and see what we can do!