



**Testimony to NYC Council Committees on
Finance, Health, Mental Health, Disabilities and
Addiction & Hospitals
FY25 Executive Budget Hearing, May 13, 2024**

Hello Chairperson and members of the New York City Council. My name is Joelle Ballam-Schwan and I am with the Supportive Housing Network of New York. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

First, we would like to thank the Council for supporting the Network's NYC 15/15 reallocation proposal by signing on to the Dear Colleague letter circulated by Mental Health Chair, Linda Lee. Thank you, Chair Lee. NYC 15/15 is the primary mechanism for supportive housing development in the city, and it is failing to meet its target. This means that critical units are not being brought online that could house New Yorkers in need. Our proposal also seeks to expand NYC 15/15 eligibility to include those exiting institutional settings and survivors of domestic violence.

Next, we want to thank the council and the administration for the human services sector COLA. The proposed three-year, three percent wage increase will help these essential workers support themselves and their families as they continue to provide critical services to some of New York's most vulnerable residents.

However, the City must ensure that the nonprofits that employ these workers are paid on time. Nonprofits are under significant financial strain due to the City's failure to reimburse them for contractually mandated services in a timely manner. Some providers are still awaiting payment for services provided in 2018, with millions of dollars in arrears.

As proposed, the Executive Budget's significant cuts to the Mayor's Office of Contract Services would exacerbate this already untenable situation. We urge the Council and Administration to restore funds to personnel and non-personnel services to avert further harm.

Thank you also to the Council for including \$6.4M to expand the Justice Involved Supportive Housing Program in your preliminary budget response. Please stand strong in final budget negotiations to ensure increased access to supportive housing for individuals leaving jail or prison.

The Network is also a member of Correct Crisis Intervention Today (CCIT) – NYC, a coalition advocating for a peer-led, nonpolice mental health crisis response system. The current pilot program, B-HEARD, omits peers. We ask that Council adopt best practices of CCCIT-NYC's model and focus on placing trained peers on B-HEARD response teams, as well as *fully* restore prior B-HEARD PEG cuts. With the recent tragic killing of Win Rosario, we must say enough is enough, and fully invest in/build out a true peer-led mental health crisis response program in our city.