



HOMELESS SERVICES UNITED

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**New York City Council Committees on General Welfare and Housing and Buildings
Oversight - Three Quarters Housing
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**Testimony of Homeless Services United respectively submitted by
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Homeless Services United (HSU). HSU is a coalition of over 50 non-profit agencies serving homeless and at-risk adults and families in New York City. HSU provides advocacy, information, and training to member agencies to expand their capacity to deliver high-quality services. HSU advocates for expansion of affordable housing and prevention services and for immediate access to safe, decent, emergency and transitional housing, outreach and drop-in services for homeless New Yorkers.

Homeless Services United's member agencies operate hundreds of programs including shelters, drop-in centers, food pantries, HomeBase, and outreach and prevention services. Each day, HSU member programs work with thousands of homeless families and individuals, preventing shelter entry whenever possible and working to end homelessness through counseling, social services, health care, legal services, and public benefits assistance, among many other supports.

On behalf of HSU, I would like to thank the City Council for holding this hearing and for your efforts to protect tenants of Three Quarter Houses who are so often subject to dangerous conditions and abusive landlord practices. The Council has correctly identified steps necessary to minimize the harms caused by Three Quarters Housing by:

- 1) Measuring the scope of the problem as per reporting requirements outlined in Intro 1166-2016
- 2) Ensuring tenants are aware of their rights to avoid unlawful evictions as outlined in Intro 1164-2016
- 3) Giving tenants adequate time to and are able to qualify for resources to relocate without losing access to assistance as outlined in Intro 1167-2016 and Intro 1171-2016 and
- 4) Ensuring that no tenant is required to undergo medical treatment to maintain residence in their housing.

Your efforts to protect the basic rights of persons living in such places is an important step to reduce harm to these tenants, but we must go further. It is essential that the City come up with viable alternatives to Three Quarters Housing so that no one has to live in such conditions at all. It is incumbent upon us to examine the structural issues that contributed to the creation of Three Quarters Houses in the first place and examine ways to negate the need for this housing type altogether.

When local communities pushback against siting new purpose-built shelters, the City must make do with temporary fixes to meet the immediate need. We urge the City Council to engage with DHS and their local community districts to have a meaningful dialogue when new shelters are proposed, because the refusal to create additional shelters is the continued cause of the City's reliance on service lacking expensive options, like for-profit hotels, motels, and Three Quarters Housing.

Resolution 1035-2016 calling for the NYS Office of Temporary Disability and Assistance to raise the shelter allowance acknowledges the broader issue at play and we support its passage. We also support additional efforts that the City can take on its own to ensure that New Yorkers have access to adequate housing. This involves making sure that the shelter system is equipped to meet the needs of persons who need immediate placement in a safe environment in an

emergency as well as ensuring that the supply and quality of deeply affordable housing is available to persons experiencing and at risk of homelessness. Such steps include but are not limited to:

- 1) Fully funding and implementing New York City's commitment for the creation of 15,000 supportive housing units
- 2) Maximizing the number of housing placements available to homeless New Yorkers in NYCHA Public Housing , including for single homeless adults who are currently excluded from the emergency priority for homeless people
- 3) Increase the number of Section 8 vouchers administered by HPD and NYCHA available to homeless New Yorkers
- 4) Ensuring that new affordable housing development contains units set aside for homeless New Yorkers and that every effort is made to increase the total number of units affordable to persons earning less than 30% of Area Median Income
- 5) Addressing funding shortfalls for DHS shelter contracts to improve shelter conditions and fully implement the reforms outlined in DHS's 90-day review of homeless services. This is necessary to improve services and conditions in shelters thereby improving client experience and allaying the fears of persons who may otherwise turn to Three Quarters Housing
- 6) Improving targeting and design of rental assistance programs to ensure homeless prevention programs, providers serving homeless youth, and others have the tools necessary to help New Yorkers identify and maintain appropriate housing. Examples include implementing the proposed reform to make residents of DYCD shelter for homeless youth eligible for City sponsored rental subsidies as well as providing tools to enforce tenant protection provisions of the LINC and CityFEPS programs concerning lease renewals and re-certifications.
- 7) Supporting the creation and funding of purpose built shelters in neighborhoods throughout New York City to right-size the shelter system and ensure that quality shelter services are available to all New Yorkers who need them

HSU applauds the Council's efforts to support tenants living in the shadows in inadequate housing and looks forward to working with you to holistically address homelessness and housing instability.