



HOMELESS SERVICES UNITED

446 W. 33RD STREET, 6TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NY 10001-2601
T 212-367-1562
www.HSUnited.org

Testimony of Homeless Services United before the City Council Committees on General Welfare and Youth Services September 28, 2017

My name is Catherine Trapani, and I am the Executive Director of Homeless Services United (HSU). HSU is a coalition of approximately 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.

As the organization that represents the non-profit DHS homeless shelter organizations, HSU has great interest in policy changes that impact homeless services delivery to our clients and to ensuring that our missions, staff, and programs are providing the most compassionate, effective, and efficient services to transform lives from homelessness to being stably housed. It is our belief that every person experiencing a housing crisis deserves access to high quality care and receives the support they need to overcome homelessness. Homeless young people are no exception. In fact, it is imperative that programs with specialized services to meet the unique needs of our youth such as DYCD supported drop-ins, outreach and shelter programs are appropriately resourced so that the young people they serve can achieve stability and not simply “graduate” to an adult homeless system not explicitly designed to meet their needs.

As such, we support this package of legislation, which will have the effect of better tracking the needs of homeless youth so we can better understand what it will take to effectively serve them. This legislation will allow young people up to the age of 24 to stay in specialized DYCD shelters for enough time to address their housing and service needs and, for those who cannot link to housing in even the extended amount of time allotted, find appropriate placement in DHS adult shelters. This will prevent them from going through the trauma and dislocation of entering an assessment shelter first where they must re-establish eligibility for a service we all know they should be entitled to.

We would like to note that in order for these bills to have their intended impact, it is essential that sufficient funding be allocated to DYCD so that the resources they need to accommodate longer lengths of stay are in place, particularly since raising the age of eligibility through 24 will also mean that more young people would qualify for specialized service. If we are successful in resourcing these programs appropriately, with the passing of this legislation every homeless young person in NYC will be entitled to appropriate shelter services designed to meet their needs.

We are pleased that this administration has been largely supportive of the goals of this package of bills and encourage the Council to move them forward such that regardless of which way the political winds may blow in the future, young people will be able to access these vital services.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.