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**Testimony of Homeless Services United before the City Council Committees on Youth Services  
February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

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 as well as ensure that young people can remain in age appropriate shelter through age 24. While we recognize the need for a comprehensive assessment of the number and needs of our runaway and homeless youth, we urge the City to not await the creation of a Capacity Plan to provide sufficient units of specialized DYCD shelter and services to meet the need. By conservative estimates, 3,800 young people are homeless in the City every night, desperately try to find a safe place to sleep. They are often forced to resort to the subway, to trade sex for shelter, or wind up bouncing from “couch to couch” while awaiting an available shelter bed that feels safe.

Recognizing that young adults still have complex needs when they’re 21, this legislation will allow young people through age of 24 to stay in specialized DYCD shelters for additional time to address their housing and service needs.

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.

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.