



Testimony of

Coalition for the Homeless

on

New York City Council Fiscal Year 2020 Executive Budget Hearings

presented before
New York City Council
Committee on Finance
Subcommittee on Capital Budget

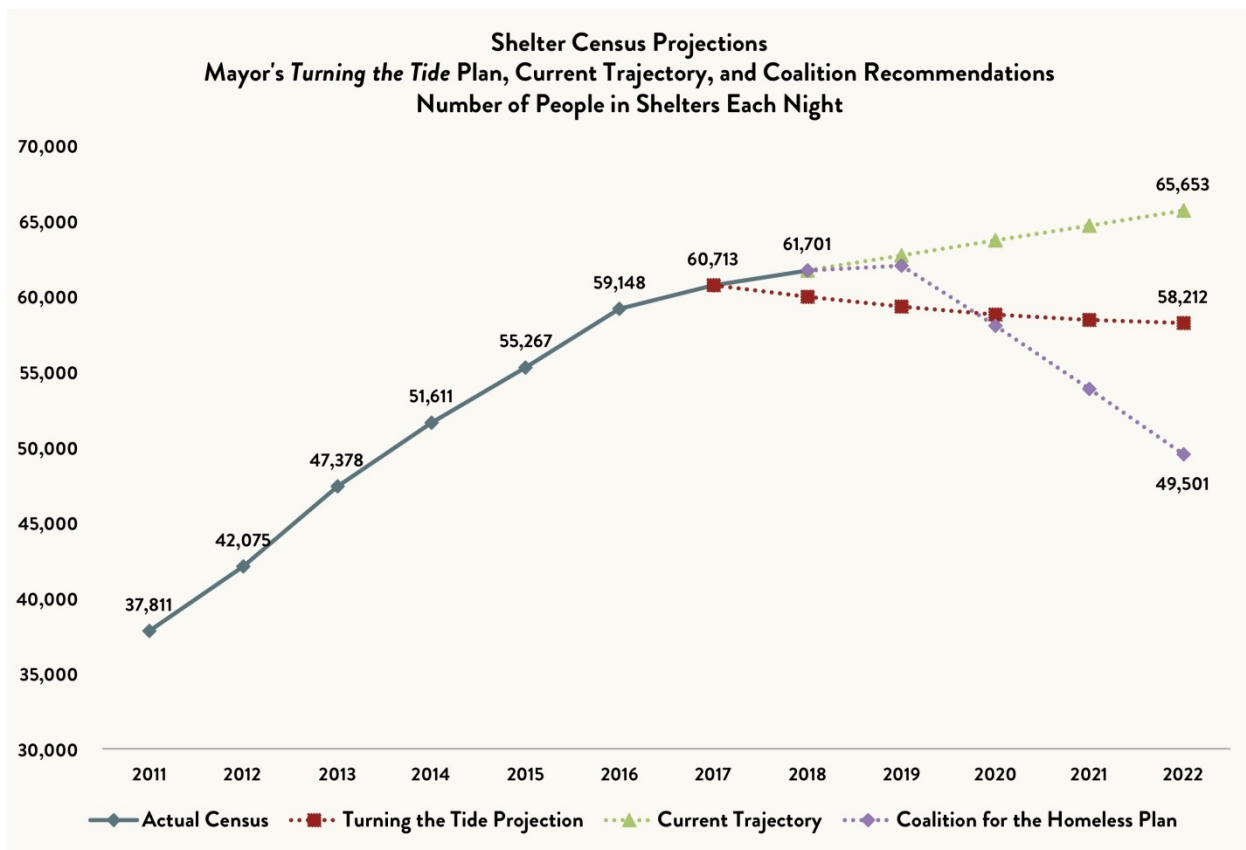
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The Coalition for the Homeless welcomes this opportunity to testify before the New York City Council Committee on Finance and Subcommittee on Capital Budget regarding the FY 2020 Executive Budget.

Record Homelessness in NYC

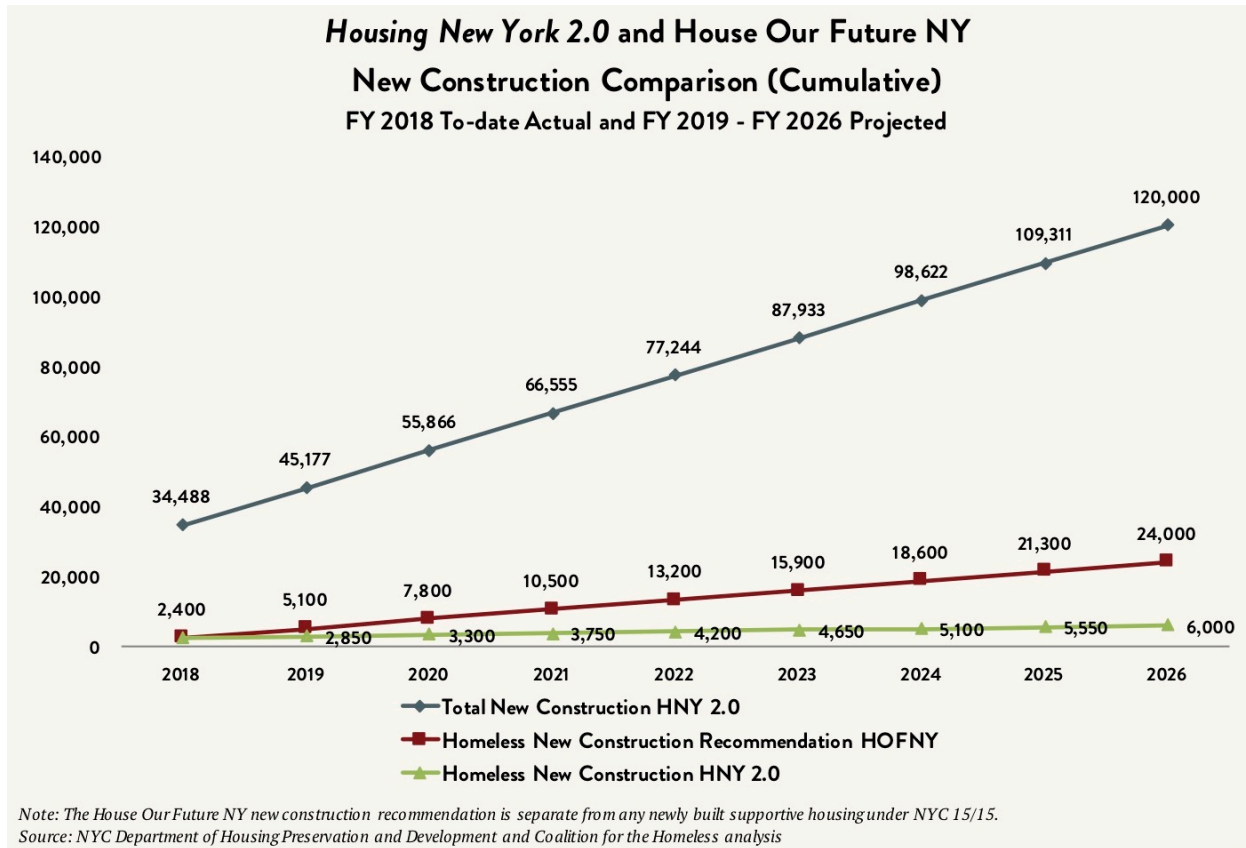
New York City remains in the midst of the worst homelessness crisis since the Great Depression. In March 2019, 63,029 men, women, and children slept in shelters each night, just shy of an all-time record set in January. As tens of thousands of New Yorkers suffer the indignities of homelessness every night, Mayor de Blasio’s resistance to building more permanent housing for homeless New Yorkers will only worsen the crisis in the coming years. In 2017, Mayor de Blasio improvidently predicted a decline in the shelter census of a mere 2,500 people by 2022. But unless more permanent affordable housing is built, the shelter census will instead *rise* by 5,000 people during the same period. This projected increase in the shelter census can be avoided if the City implements the critical housing recommendations described below.



Budget and Policy Priorities

For more than a year, the Coalition for the Homeless has been leading the [House Our Future NY](#) Campaign in partnership with 64 other organizations. The campaign is urging Mayor de Blasio to build 24,000 apartments and preserve at least 6,000 more for homeless New Yorkers, for a total of 30,000 in his 300,000-unit *Housing New York 2.0* plan. Mayor de Blasio’s housing plan currently sets aside just 15,000 apartments for homeless New Yorkers, with most of those units financed through the preservation of apartments that are already occupied and thus not available to those desperately trying to move out of shelters. The House Our Future NY Campaign’s emphasis on new construction will

expand the supply of affordable housing and create apartments available for immediate occupancy by homeless New Yorkers. The Coalition urges the City to immediately implement the House Our Future NY Campaign’s plan in order to match the scale of the ongoing homelessness crisis. To meet the Campaign’s goal, the City will need to build roughly 2,700 new apartments each year between now and 2026.



The Coalition also urges the Mayor to accelerate the creation of 15,000 City-funded, supportive housing units by scheduling their completion by 2025 rather than 2030. These units are critically needed because the single adult shelter census continues to increase by 10 percent each year, while placements into supportive housing are at a 14-year low.

Although the Coalition’s recommendations have budgetary implications, they can be funded in a number of ways, including by leveraging existing Federal and City funds. Implementation of the Coalition’s recommendations will ultimately reduce the staggering cost of sheltering tens of thousands of New Yorkers each night – a financial burden that has fallen disproportionately on the City.

For more information on our recommendations for Mayor de Blasio and Governor Cuomo to address record homelessness in New York City, please refer to our *State of the Homeless 2019* report available at www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/soth2019.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

About Coalition for the Homeless

Coalition for the Homeless, founded in 1981, is a not-for-profit advocacy and direct services organization that assists more than 3,500 homeless New Yorkers each day. The Coalition advocates for proven, cost-effective solutions to the crisis of modern homelessness, which is now in its fourth decade. The Coalition also protects the rights of homeless people through litigation involving the right to emergency shelter, the right to vote, the right to reasonable accommodations for those with disabilities, and life-saving housing and services for homeless people living with mental illness and HIV/AIDS.

The Coalition operates 11 direct-services programs that offer vital services to homeless, at-risk, and low-income New Yorkers. These programs also demonstrate effective, long-term solutions and include: Supportive housing for families and individuals living with AIDS; job-training for homeless and formerly homeless women; and permanent housing for formerly homeless families and individuals. Our summer sleep-away camp and after-school program help hundreds of homeless children each year. The Coalition's mobile soup kitchen distributes over 900 nutritious hot meals each night to homeless and hungry New Yorkers on the streets of Manhattan and the Bronx. Finally, our Crisis Intervention Department assists more than 1,000 homeless and at-risk households each month with eviction prevention, individual advocacy, referrals for shelter and emergency food programs, and assistance with public benefits as well as basic necessities such as diapers, formula, work uniforms, and money for medications and groceries.

The Coalition was founded in concert with landmark right to shelter litigation filed on behalf of homeless men and women (*Callahan v. Carey* and *Eldredge v. Koch*) and remains a plaintiff in these now consolidated cases. In 1981, the City and State entered into a consent decree in *Callahan* through which they agreed: "The City defendants shall provide shelter and board to each homeless man who applies for it provided that (a) the man meets the need standard to qualify for the home relief program established in New York State; or (b) the man by reason of physical, mental or social dysfunction is in need of temporary shelter." The *Eldredge* case extended this legal requirement to homeless single women. The *Callahan* consent decree and the *Eldredge* case also guarantee basic standards for shelters for homeless men and women. Pursuant to the decree, the Coalition serves as court-appointed monitor of municipal shelters for homeless adults, and the City has also authorized the Coalition to monitor other facilities serving homeless families. In 2017, the Coalition, fellow institutional plaintiff Center for Independence of the Disabled – New York, and homeless New Yorkers with disabilities were represented by The Legal Aid Society and pro-bono counsel White & Case in the settlement of *Butler v. City of New York*, which is designed to ensure that the right to shelter includes accessible accommodations for those with disabilities, consistent with Federal, State, and local laws.