



Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness  
for Women and their Children

February 2, 2021

The Honorable Corey Johnson  
Speaker of the New York City Council  
250 Broadway  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Speaker Johnson,

As leaders of organizations that serve and represent New York City's residents and interest groups, we are deeply concerned about the disproportionate impact the City's economic crisis is having on vulnerable low-income New Yorkers. While City leadership is rightly focused on the crucial issues of public health, education, and business reopening, they must also take steps to ensure that we come out of this crisis as a more just and equitable City, one that supports New Yorkers in need and builds the resilience to overcome future challenges and crises. To that end, we are writing today to seek your support to fix a critical, but broken, tool for combatting homelessness—the CityFHEPS rental voucher program.

CityFHEPS is the best hope for many New Yorkers seeking to escape homelessness, but it often provides elusive hope because the voucher pays hundreds of dollars less than market rent. The City Council's proposal, Intro. 146, would raise the maximum rent for the voucher and tie it to Fair Market Rent—the same standard used for Section 8 and other housing subsidy programs. We urge you to pass this legislation to unlock housing opportunity and choice for extremely low-income New Yorkers, and to ensure that NYC's housing tools are working effectively for our residents as the City recovers from COVID-19.

There is no neighborhood in NYC where the median asking rent is within the current CityFHEPS rent limits for a family of three or four. But since March, if the voucher paid Fair Market Rent there would have been 15 neighborhoods where the median asking rent was affordable. This means that if Intro. 146 had been passed before the pandemic, homeless New Yorkers with a CityFHEPS voucher would have had apartment options in 15 neighborhoods, instead of in zero. Homeless New Yorkers are spending months, even years, longer in shelter than they would if the voucher paid Fair Market Rent. With hundreds of essential workers currently in homeless shelters (for example, since March, nearly 350 adults in Win shelters alone have been essential workers at some point during the pandemic), it is unfair to offer empty hope in the form of rental assistance that does not pay the rent.



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Increasing voucher amounts will not only create housing opportunity and choice for voucher holders, it will save the City money at a time when there is a projected multi-year budget deficit. For each month less that one family with children spends in shelter due to an increased housing voucher amount, the city will save more than \$6,000 in shelter costs.

Intro. 146 already has a veto proof majority of Council Members signed on in support, from all five boroughs. We ask you to join us in supporting this legislation and to pass it into law with the urgency felt by every family working to leave shelter. Creating housing opportunity for working New Yorkers who live in shelters is both fair and fiscally responsible, and helps to ensure that our lowest-income neighbors are not left further behind during the economic recovery.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Sun and Thomas Yu  
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