



Joint Testimony of
Coalition for the Homeless

and

Legal Aid Society

before the General Welfare Committee
of the New York City Council

on the

Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2025, the Preliminary Capital Plan for Fiscal
Years 2024-2028, and the Fiscal 2024 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report

submitted by

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The Coalition for the Homeless (“Coalition”) and The Legal Aid Society (“Legal Aid”) welcome this opportunity to testify before the New York City Council’s Committee on General Welfare. As the court- and City-appointed independent monitor of the Department of Homeless Services (“DHS”) shelter system and counsel in the historic *Callahan*, *Eldredge*, and *Boston* cases that created the right to shelter in New York City (“NYC”), we are uniquely situated to provide insight into the impact of proposed funding for the shelter system and related programs serving all unhoused New Yorkers.

Compounding Crisis, Failed Responses

NYC has one of the largest populations of unhoused people in the United States. On the week ending February 25, 2024, there were 120,043 people sleeping in the DHS shelter system and the network of crisis shelters set up by other City agencies to provide emergency shelter for asylum seekers and other new arrivals.¹ This staggeringly high figure does not include the thousands of New Yorkers in Human Resources Administration (“HRA”) domestic violence shelters, Department of Youth and Community Development (“DCYD”) shelters for youth, and Department of Housing Preservation and Development (“HPD”) shelters for those burned out of their apartments. Nor does it include the many thousands of people sleeping unsheltered in public spaces, or the tens of thousands temporarily sleeping doubled- and tripled-up in the homes of others. As such, the number of people without homes in New York has never been higher.

These alarming statistics have been fueled by decades of underinvestment in permanent affordable housing for low-income communities and the failure of all levels of government to enact policies to meaningfully reverse this trend. The affordable housing shortage in NYC, particularly for extremely low-income (“ELI”) households, is underscored by stark data revealing the depth of the crisis. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition’s 2023 report, “The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes,” there is a glaring disparity in the availability of affordable housing: for every 100 ELI households in the New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA metro area, there are merely 31 affordable and available rental units.² In a city where the cost of living far exceeds national averages, and ELI households are defined as those earning at or below the poverty line or 30 percent of the area median income (“AMI”), this gap leaves a vast number of residents in precarious housing situations.

The worsening housing precarity in NYC is evidenced by the growing rent burdens borne by its residents. Defined as those spending more than 30 percent of their incomes on rent, rent-burdened households increased from 53 percent in 2021 to an alarming 86 percent in 2023. Meanwhile, the number of ELI households who were severely rent-burdened (spending more than 50 percent of their income on housing) increased to 74 percent.³ This financial strain severely limits the capacity of ELI households to afford other necessities, such as food, healthcare, and childcare. It forces many of them to live in overcrowded conditions – defined as having more than two people per bedroom or more than one person living in a studio apartment. In fact, nearly a quarter (23 percent) of NYC households with at least one child are

¹ The term “new arrivals” refers to people who are international migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, who arrived in New York City after March 15, 2022.

² Nat’l Low-Income Housing Coalition, *The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes*, at App. B (Mar. 2023), available at <https://nlihc.org/gap>.

³ *Id.*

overcrowded.^{4,5} Given that living in overcrowded conditions is frequently a precursor to homelessness, such statistics portend greater levels of mass homelessness if this affordable housing crisis continues.

The dynamics of NYC's real estate market have also exacerbated the affordable housing shortage. The city's median rent has consistently outpaced inflation and income growth, creating an environment where affordable housing becomes increasingly scarce. Rent-stabilized units are particularly difficult to come by. Per the most recent Housing Vacancy Survey, the vacancy rate for rent stabilized units was less than 1 percent in 2023 – down from an already distressingly low 4.6 percent in 2021.⁶ More to the point, the vacancy rate for affordable apartments – those renting for less than \$1,100 per month – was only 0.39 percent. Effectively, there are no affordable apartments left in New York for those who need them most.

Coupled with this is the fact that evictions in NYC have significantly increased in 2023, nearing pre-COVID levels, with city marshals completing approximately 12,000 residential evictions due to unpaid rent and a backlog of cases in the court system.⁷ This surge represents nearly a tripling of evictions compared to 2022, following the end of statewide tenant protections early in the pandemic. The increase in evictions is particularly affecting low-income residents and communities of color and further straining the city's social safety net. In addition, this surge in evictions, in conjunction with a near-total lack of available affordable housing, has made a substantial increase in mass homelessness in the city a near-inevitability.

Adding to the pressures on the shelter, social services, and housing systems is the arrival of asylum seekers and other people coming to the United States seeking safety and economic opportunity. By February 25, 2024, there were 64,709 new arrivals sleeping in the network of emergency shelters operated by DHS, NYC Health and Hospitals, NYC Emergency Management, HPD, and DYCD. The disappointing failure of the Federal Government and New York State to provide the resources and leadership needed to properly manage the influx of new arrivals in a sane and humane way cannot be overstated. The continued reluctance of Governor Hochul to help provide more shelter facilities for new arrivals, to override the bigoted executive orders in update counties that hamper the City's ability resettle new arrivals, and her failure to make the Migrant Relocation Assistance Program work in any meaningful way, have all put more pressure on the City's shelter system.⁸

Nevertheless, the City must step up to ensure that these vulnerable people can recover from the trauma of their journey and resettle and start new lives in New York. Reported costs associated with temporary housing and services for new arrivals are ever-changing and opaque but should not be an excuse to cut funding to the programs and agencies that are necessary for NYC to meet its legal and moral obligations – especially to those in the greatest need.

⁴ N.Y.C. DEP'T OF HOUSING PRESERVATION & DEVELOPMENT, *2023 New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey Selected Initial Findings* (2024), <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdfs/about/2023-nychvs-selected-initial-findings.pdf>.

⁵ N.Y.C. DEP'T OF HOUSING PRESERVATION & DEVELOPMENT, *2021 New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey Selected Initial Findings* (2022), <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdfs/services/2021-nychvs-selected-initial-findings.pdf>.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ David Brand, *NYC Evictions Surged in 2023, with Legal Lockouts Nearing Pre-COVID Levels*, GOTHAMIST (Jan. 11, 2024), <https://gothamist.com/news/nyc-evictions-surged-in-2023-with-legal-lockouts-nearing-pre-covid-levels>.

⁸ Dana Rubinstein, Andy Newman, and Wesley Parnell, *Why a \$25 Million Plan to Relocate N.Y.C. Migrant Families Is Struggling*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 25, 2024), <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/25/nyregion/migrants-relocation-ny.html>

The Mayor’s preliminary budget fails to address the lack of affordable housing for those who need it most, and insufficiently funds the agencies and programs that assist people who are unsheltered, that provide shelter, and that help people to move from shelter to affordable housing.

Helping Unsheltered New Yorkers

Low-Barrier Shelter Settings

The City must invest more for low threshold shelters, including Safe Havens and stabilization beds. Every NYC resident can see that the number of people suffering on the streets continues to increase. These low-barrier shelter settings offer fewer restrictions, more privacy and security, and better staffing and social services to meet the needs of our unsheltered neighbors.

While the Mayor has oft stated the need for creating more Safe Haven and stabilization beds, it has simply not resulted in a significant increase in available beds. Last year, the Coalition called for at least 3,000 additional Safe Haven and stabilization beds to meet the needs of unsheltered New Yorkers. In FY2024, the City created only 120 new Safe Haven beds even though they are proven to be better than the general shelter system for unsheltered individuals with mental illness and other disabilities.⁹ Rather than ensuring that we have a sufficient number of these critical beds, the City and State are doubling-down on law enforcement, despite decades of data and direct experience demonstrating that policing homelessness does not work and is counter-productive. The City must provide immediate relief by increasing the number of Safe Haven and stabilization beds available to serve unsheltered New Yorkers.

Intensive Mobile Treatment and Assertive Community Treatment

In addition to low barrier shelter beds, there is a desperate need for functional and expanded Intensive Mobile Treatment (“IMT”) teams and more funding for Assertive Community Treatment (“ACT”) teams. Both IMT and ACT are designed to provide intensive, continuous, flexible support and treatment to individuals in their communities, including mental health, substance use, and peer specialists including psychiatric treatment and medication, and facilitated connections to housing and supportive services. While the existing IMT program has shown some promising results, a report by the NYC Comptroller reveals critical management deficiencies, including lack of consistent treatment, and lack of coordination between agencies.¹⁰ Appropriate caseloads and staffing levels allow for truly assertive care. More robust oversight of team activities and discharge planning are key to offering the care people require to avoid preventable time spent in hospitals and jails.

Just a few days ago, we had an internal meeting about a client of the Coalition who has been waiting one and half years to be connected with an IMT team. And our experience is in no way unique. Both ACT and IMT are a critical part of addressing the needs of unsheltered individuals with serious mental illness, but key reforms and increased funding are needed for it to realize its full potential. If NYC truly wants to meet the standard of providing appropriate access to mental health care in the community, and to hold ourselves accountable to the standard of placing individuals in the least restrictive setting possible, then it requires allocating adequate funding to actually make those resources and services available to people in need.

⁹ THE CITY OF NEW YORK, Preliminary Mayor’s Management Report (Jan. 2024), at 218, https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2024/2024_pmmr.pdf.

¹⁰ OFFICE OF THE N.Y.C. COMPTROLLER, *Audit Report on Intensive Mobile Treatment Initiative Carried Out by Department of Health and Mental Hygiene* (Feb. 5, 2024), <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/audit-report-on-intensive-mobile-treatment-initiative-carried-out-by-department-of-health-and-mental-hygiene>.

The Right to Shelter

As the Court-appointed independent monitor of the shelter system for single adults and the City-appointed independent monitor of the shelter system for families, we are deeply concerned with the City's attack on the legal Right to Shelter and with the day-to-day problems we are seeing as our clients are trying to avail themselves of that lifesaving right. While we acknowledge that the City has managed to add a significant number of shelter facilities and beds to the system as the influx of new arrivals has created a greater need for such, that does not relieve the City of its legal and moral responsibility to provide safe, decent, and accessible shelter to those who need it.

Over the past month, the Coalition has received a surge of complaints from homeless longer-term New Yorkers who either transferred from their existing placement or newly entering the shelter system through the intake, were directed to a shelter placement, only to learn when they arrived that the shelter did not have a bed available, or that they were sent to the wrong shelter site. This situation has resulted in people sleeping in chairs for days or ending up back on the streets – both of which are unacceptable. In addition, we are seeing significant delays in the processing and fulfilling of requests for reasonable accommodations for homeless individuals with disabilities. Whether the cause is insufficient budgets, too few staff, lack of training, or mismanagement, the end result is the same: people's rights are being denied.

The City is also notably failing to meet its legal and moral obligation to provide shelter beds for adult new arrivals who are sent to the "Reticketing Center" at St. Brigid's in the East Village once their 30-day shelter placements are up. These individuals wait days, and sometimes weeks, for a bed and are offered little more than uncomfortable nights sleeping upright in chairs in overcrowded waiting rooms and overflow sites, with no access to showers or meals. Many simply end up on our streets. Again, this is not acceptable. No person in our city should be denied safe, decent and accessible shelter and relegated to bedding down on the streets or in the subways.

Reverse Agency Budget Cuts on Essential Services

Agency budget cuts and staffing shortages are creating dysfunction in City agencies' ability to deliver key services. These failures impact every step of a person's path in seeking shelter, getting access to services, and moving out of shelter to permanent housing. At the same time that agency budgets and staffing have been cut, NYC is wasting millions of dollars on no-bid, emergency contracts for services to new arrivals. An audit by the NYC Comptroller found that the City has entered into no-bid contracts totaling \$5.7 billion with for-profit vendors.¹¹ In numerous instances, the Comptroller found costs in these contracts "varied wildly for the same services" and at rates significantly higher than those paid to existing shelter vendors.¹²

These inefficiencies must be corrected and funding restored to agencies to prevent further worsening of existing staffing shortages and administrative delays. It is incumbent on the City to restore staffing levels to ensure that homeless individuals and families encounter fewer bureaucratic obstacles and are provided with the services and housing assistance they need.

Fund the City FHEPS Program Expansion and Fix Bureaucratic Delays

¹¹ OFFICE OF THE N.Y.C. COMPTROLLER, *Asylum Seeker Staffing Contract Comparison and Review* (Feb. 27, 2024), <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/asylum-seeker-staffing-contract-comparison-and-review/#conclusion>.

¹² *Id.*

In May 2023, the City Council took an important step toward ameliorating the City’s homelessness crisis by expanding the CityFHEPS program eligibility. However, the Mayor has refused to implement the legislation and the Mayor’s preliminary budget does not plan for increases in the program due to expanded eligibility.¹³ For FY2024, the January 2024 Financial Plan increases the estimate of City spending on rental assistance by \$442 million, to a total of \$774 million.¹⁴ But, the plan for fiscal years 2025-2028 does not include any additional increases that would reflect expanded program eligibility. The City has chronically underbudgeted the CityFHEPS program, relying on mid-year budget adjustments. This failure to budget appropriately for CityFHEPS creates a chronic gap between funding allocated and actual spending.¹⁵ The Mayor must implement all aspects of the CityFHEPS expansion, and we applaud the City Council for the steps it is taking to see to that.

Successful expansion of the CityFHEPS program is also dependent on fixing the unnecessary delays and hurdles that plague every step of the process. Clients of the Coalition and Legal Aid frequently experience delays in processing their applications for CityFHEPS, approvals of apartments, and payments to landlords. Despite increases to the rent levels for CityFHEPS vouchers, there have been only small increases in the number of people exiting shelter to subsidized housing, according to the Mayor’s Preliminary Management Report. Subsidized exits increased by 4 percent for single adults in the first four months of Fiscal 2024 compared to the same period in the prior year. For families with children, subsidized exits increased by only 1 percent, but this increase was offset by fewer Supportive Housing and Emergency Housing Voucher (“EHV”) program placements.¹⁶

While the length of time that people remain in shelter before finding a way back to permanent housing appears to have decreased slightly, that decrease most likely reflects the transfer of new arrivals from DHS shelters to shelters operated by other City agencies. And disturbingly, there remain roughly 10,000 households in DHS shelters who are eligible for CityFHEPS vouchers, but have not been able to use the program.¹⁷ This shocking figure signals a profound failure on the part of the City to address the obstacles to utilizing these vouchers that the Coalition and Legal Aid have long been urging the City to address. The CityFHEPS program is hampered by delays in approving applications, approving units, in providing payments to housing providers and, of course, by source of income discrimination. Delays persist, despite a lawsuit filed by Legal Aid on behalf of seven tenants who faced delays in processing voucher recertifications, putting them at risk of eviction.¹⁸ We recommend the following improvements:

- Increased communication to residents about the status of their application, whether an apartment meets habitability requirements, and resources to assist with their housing search.
- Better training of shelter staff about benefits rules related to subsidies.
- Addressing disruptions when a shelter resident is transferred or assigned a new case worker.

¹³ Sahalie Donaldson, *Council authorizes lawsuit over CityFHEPS housing voucher expansion*, CITY & STATE NEW YORK (Feb. 8, 2024), <https://www.cityandstateny.com/politics/2024/02/council-authorizes-lawsuit-over-cityfheps-housing-voucher-expansion/394048>.

¹⁴ N.Y.C. OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET, *January 2024 Financial Plan, Fiscal Years 2024-2028, Financial Plan Detail* (2024), <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/tech1-24.pdf>. See also INDEPENDENT BUDGET OFFICE OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK, *Analysis of the 2025 Preliminary Budget and Financial Plan by the Independent Budget Office* (2025), <https://ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/preliminary-budget-february-2024.html>.

¹⁵ https://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/CityFHEPS_Jan2024.pdf at 3.

¹⁶ THE CITY OF NEW YORK, *Preliminary Mayor’s Management Report* (Jan. 2024), at 217, https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2024/2024_pmmr.pdf.

¹⁷ *Id.* at 218.

¹⁸ Mihir Zaveri, *Program That Fights Homelessness Is Mired in Dysfunction, Advocates Say*, THE NEW YORK TIMES (Apr. 5, 2023), <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/05/nyregion/ny-housing-voucher-program-problems.html>

- Provide clear reasons for pre-clearance failures and concrete steps to address any issues, and allow community groups to submit pre-clearance forms.
- Address source of income discrimination through better communication to shelter residents and staff about anti-discrimination rights and increased funding to the NYC Commission on Human Rights.

Creating Permanent, Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention

Permanent affordable housing is the only solution to the decades-long homelessness crisis that shames our city. While the Coalition and Legal Aid will continue to vigorously defend the Right to Shelter, our ultimate goal is to make shelters unnecessary. A critical tool in this effort is increasing access to rent vouchers, something the Mayor is obstructing. But because rent vouchers alone are not enough, there must also be significant investments in affordable housing. Yet, the City has no plan that acknowledges and addresses the housing need for homeless and ELI individuals and families. The Mayor's City of Yes for Housing Opportunity proposal simply does not set requirements for deep affordability and similarly none of the current proposals by the Governor attempt to address this deficiency. As such, there is not enough housing being developed for those who need it most, and no plan in place that fills this void.

Fund Affordable Housing Creation for Homeless and Extremely Low-Income New Yorkers

The City must also allocate \$2.5 billion in additional new construction financing each year for the next five years for apartments to specifically be built for homeless and ELI New Yorkers. Increased funding at this level would support:

- Doubling the set-aside in new affordable housing developments for homeless households to 30 percent in order to produce at least 6,000 new apartments per year; and
- Building an additional 6,000 apartments per year for ELI households.
- Accelerating the creation of 15,000 City-funded supportive housing units by scheduling their completion by 2025 rather than 2030.

The only way to decrease the number of people living without shelter and the crisis in the shelter system is through permanent, affordable housing. The increasing need for emergency shelter over the past 43 years has been exacerbated by the depletion of housing that is affordable to those at the lowest income levels. Between 2017 and 2021 alone, NYC lost 96,000 housing units with rents under \$1,500, while gaining 107,000 units with rents of \$2,300 or more.¹⁹ Such a dramatic loss in the supply of apartments affordable to low-income renters, including those relying on a public assistance rental allowance, shuts many New Yorkers out of the housing market entirely.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. We look forward to working with the Council on the budget and other legislation to address the needs of those who are unhoused or precariously housed throughout NYC.

¹⁹ (2022) *2021 New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey Selected Initial Findings*, available at <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdfs/services/2021-nychvs-selected-initial-findings.pdf>.

About Legal Aid and the Coalition

The Legal Aid Society: Legal Aid, the nation’s oldest and largest not-for-profit legal services organization, is more than a law firm for clients who cannot afford to pay for counsel. It is an indispensable component of the legal, social, and economic fabric of NYC – passionately advocating for low-income individuals and families across a variety of civil, criminal, and juvenile rights matters, while also fighting for legal reform.

Legal Aid has performed this role in City, State, and federal courts since 1876. It does so by capitalizing on the diverse expertise, experience, and capabilities of more than 2,000 attorneys, social workers, paralegals, and support and administrative staff. Through a network of borough, neighborhood, and courthouse offices in 26 locations in NYC, Legal Aid provides comprehensive legal services in all five boroughs of NYC for clients who cannot afford to pay for private counsel.

Legal Aid’s legal program operates three major practices — Civil, Criminal, and Juvenile Rights — and receives volunteer help from law firms, corporate law departments and expert consultants that is coordinated by Legal Aid’s Pro Bono program. With its annual caseload of more than 300,000 legal matters, Legal Aid takes on more cases for more clients than any other legal services organization in the United States. And it brings a depth and breadth of perspective that is unmatched in the legal profession.

Legal Aid's unique value is an ability to go beyond any one case to create more equitable outcomes for individuals and broader, more powerful systemic change for society as a whole. In addition to the annual caseload of 300,000 individual cases and legal matters, Legal Aid’s law reform representation for clients benefits more than 1.7 million low-income families and individuals in NYC and the landmark rulings in many of these cases have a State-wide and national impact.

Legal Aid is uniquely positioned to speak on issues of law and policy as they relate to homeless New Yorkers. Legal Aid is counsel to the Coalition and for homeless women and men in the *Callahan* and *Eldredge* cases. Legal Aid is also counsel in the *McCain/Boston* litigation in which a final judgment requires the provision of lawful shelter to homeless families. Legal Aid, in collaboration with Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler, LLC, filed *C.W. v. City of New York*, a federal class action lawsuit on behalf of runaway and homeless youth in NYC. Legal Aid, along with institutional plaintiffs the Coalition and the Center for Independence of the Disabled-NY (“CIDNY”), settled *Butler v. City of New York* on behalf of all disabled New Yorkers experiencing homelessness. Also, during the pandemic, Legal Aid along with the Coalition continued to support homeless New Yorkers through litigation, including *E.G. v. City of New York*, Federal class action litigation initiated to ensure Wi-Fi access for students in DHS and HRA shelters, as well as *Fisher v. City of New York*, a lawsuit filed in New York State Supreme Court to ensure homeless single adults gain access to private hotel rooms instead of congregate shelters during the pandemic.

Coalition for the Homeless: The Coalition, founded in 1981, is a not-for-profit advocacy and direct services organization that assists more than 3,500 homeless and at-risk New Yorkers each day. The Coalition advocates for proven, cost-effective solutions to address the crisis of modern homelessness, which is now in its fifth 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 illnesses 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, scalable solutions and include: permanent housing for formerly homeless families and individuals living with HIV/AIDS; job-training for homeless and low-income 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, which usually distributes 800 to 1,000 nutritious hot meals each night to homeless and hungry New Yorkers on the streets of Manhattan and the Bronx, had to increase our meal production and distribution by as much as 40 percent and has distributed PPE and emergency supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, our Crisis Services 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. In response to the pandemic, we are operating a special Crisis Hotline (1-888-358-2384) for homeless individuals who need immediate help finding shelter or meeting other critical needs.

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 single 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 Legal Aid 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. During the pandemic, the Coalition worked with Legal Aid to support homeless New Yorkers, including through the *E.G. v. City of New York* Federal class action litigation initiated to ensure Wi-Fi access for students in DHS and HRA shelters, as well as *Fisher v. City of New York*, a lawsuit filed in New York State Supreme Court to ensure homeless single adults gain access to private hotel rooms instead of congregate shelters during the pandemic.