



coalition  
for the  
homeless

July 2024

# STATE OF THE HOMELESS 2024

Rights Under Attack, Leadership in Retreat



**Image description:** A couple stand close to each other in front of a sandstone wall. They are wearing winter coats, one has their hair in locks and dons a cap while the other wears a beanie. Their faces are somber, and expressions neutral.

Photo by Seze Devres

# STATE OF THE HOMELESS 2024

## Rights Under Attack, Leadership in Retreat



**Image description:** A teenager and adult stand next to each other, leaning against a tan brick wall. They both are wearing down jackets and their expressions are muted. The teenager looks towards the camera, while the adult, wearing a cap, looks off to the left.



**Image description:** Siblings in a close embrace. The elder stands behind the younger child and is resting their chin on the shorter's head, with their hands on the younger child's shoulders. They are standing outside, wearing black coats. Each has a slight smile on their faces.



**Image description:** Siblings embrace. The older has their right arm around the younger sibling and stares at the camera with a somber expression, while the younger smiles gently at the camera. They are standing outside, in front of a tan brick wall.



**Image description:** An adult is standing solo, in front of a metallic wall, wearing a blue hoodie. They stand slightly sideways and stare at the camera with a neutral expression.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As worsening political polarization in our nation continues to dominate the public dialogue – evidencing deep schisms in how our society views issues as basic as public welfare and the role of government – New Yorkers benefit from living in a state that has clarified and codified its position on these issues in its constitution. Article 17 of the New York State constitution plainly states that “[t]he aid, care and support of the needy are public concerns and shall be provided by the state and by such of its subdivisions, and in such manner and by such means, as the legislature may from time to time determine.”

This provision makes clear that **it is the responsibility of government to proactively address poverty.**

Ensuring that the people of New York have access to the most fundamental requirements of survival – a safe place to sleep at night, sufficient food, access to health care – is not just a *constitutional* obligation. It is a *practical* obligation, to ensure that our society can properly function day to day; and it is a *moral* obligation, to protect and foster our core humanity. However, if we allow to continue unchecked the catastrophic shortage in affordable housing, the lack of access to quality voluntary mental health care, and the difficulty in accessing the type and amount of emergency shelter and services that people need, New York will increasingly be defined not by its ingenuity, pragmatism, and compassion, but by the scale of deprivation and suffering it allows.

This is perhaps the most fundamental challenge currently faced by Mayor Adams and Governor Hochul – especially at a time when, because of the rapid arrival of so many asylum seekers and other new arrivals from foreign nations,<sup>1</sup> New York has been experiencing a major humanitarian crisis against a backdrop of an ongoing and worsening crisis of mass homelessness. Although the Mayor and Governor have the authority and the resources to improve the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in desperate need, their actions, statements, and policies have illustrated an alarming retreat from these constitutional, practical, and moral obligations.

To summarize the most basic measures of Mayor Adams’ and Governor Hochul’s performance in addressing the crises: **there are now more people experiencing homelessness, there is less affordable housing available for those who need it most, and there are more people in desperate need of social services and mental health care than at any time in recent memory.**

Even apart from the increase in the shelter census attributable to the influx of new arrivals<sup>1</sup> that began in March 2022, **the number of longer-term New Yorkers sleeping in shelters each night increased by more than 10,000 people (or 19 percent) – from 55,702 to 66,209 in April 2024.** There are now roughly 350,000 people in our city without homes.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this report, the term “new arrivals” refers to people from other nations who entered the country starting March 15, 2022 escaping violence, persecution, hardship, and other dire circumstances.

At a time when the vacancy rate for low-income apartments is approaching functional zero, Mayor Adams seems to be putting all of his eggs in one basket: City of Yes – a plan that currently contains no requirements for deep affordability to create housing for the people who need it most. It is simply another example of the City and State clinging to the fiction that “trickle-down” housing policies work.

Instead, Mayor Adams’ and Governor Hochul’s response to these crises are defined by their:

- Efforts to **dismantle core legal protections** for the most vulnerable among us by attacking the Right to Shelter;
- Placing **limitations on access to vital benefits**, such as shelter and rental vouchers; and
- **Refusal to take critical actions** that would have alleviated the crises, such as heeding recommendations from advocates for reducing the NYC shelter census, standing up to bigoted executive orders in upstate counties, creating enough housing for those who most need it, and creating a functioning resettlement plan for new arrivals.

Mayor Adams frequently touted the City’s success in quickly adding tens of thousands of new shelter beds for the new arrivals – which did of course require significant effort and coordination, and for which the City deserves credit. But given that Mayor Adams added those beds because he was legally obligated to do so under New York’s Right to Shelter – and given that he was not only in court aggressively seeking to relieve himself of that very obligation, but also imposing limits on shelter placements for new arrivals at the same time he was taking his public bows – any approbation for those additional beds should perhaps be tempered.

The data show, however, that City agencies made some welcome progress in FY23 in increasing access to permanent housing for homeless households, but the increases are modest and nowhere near the scale required to reverse the decades-long slide into catastrophic mass homelessness in New York City.

Governor Hochul’s performance over the past year was profoundly disappointing, and seemed primarily focused on ensuring that the rest of New York State played as small a role as possible in helping accommodate and resettle the new arrivals. This past year has thus been a period of lost opportunity, as the tens of thousands of households arriving here seeking to make New York their home could have and should have been welcomed to enrich our community, add to the economic and cultural base of the state, and help fill some of our roughly 460,000 unfilled jobs.

The main findings of *State of the Homeless 2024* are summarized below.

1. **The number of people in New York City without homes on any given night is approximately 350,000**, including 132,000 in shelters, thousands sleeping unsheltered in public spaces, and well over 200,000 sleeping doubled-up or tripled-up in the homes of others.
2. **Both Mayor Adams and Governor Hochul engaged in harmful and counterproductive strategies in contravention of their obligation to provide safe, appropriate, and accessible shelter to all in need:**
  - While Mayor Adams quickly added **tens of thousands of new shelter beds** for new arrivals – this was only because the City was **legally obligated to do so** under the Right to Shelter. Many City agencies, however, deserve credit for their efforts to rapidly provide more shelter capacity during the crisis to prevent a surge in the number of people sleeping unsheltered in public spaces.
  - Mayor Adams and Governor Hochul aggressively **sought to dismantle New York’s legal Right to Shelter**, not only for new arrivals but for homeless longer-term New Yorkers, as well.
  - The Mayor frequently **failed to meet the City’s legal, practical, and moral obligation to provide a sufficient number of shelter beds** for all in need of such.
  - Mayor Adams imposed **harmful limitations on shelter stays** for new arrivals with his implementation of 30-day and 60-day limits.
  - Mayor Adams failed to address dysfunction at the Adult Family Intake Center, resulting in an **abysmally low eligibility rate of 17 percent** for homeless families without minor children seeking to access shelter.
  - While Governor Hochul **provided several large sites and the funding to operate those sites** as large-scale emergency shelters for new arrivals, she drew a line in the sand beyond that, continually **asserting that sheltering new arrivals is the City’s responsibility and refusing to provide any sites outside New York City**.
  - Governor Hochul repeatedly **refused to help the City secure more shelter beds** when new arrivals were being left with nowhere to sleep but the streets or in chairs at drop-in centers.
  - Governor Hochul **refused to override xenophobic executive orders** in dozens of counties throughout the state that barred the City from sending new arrivals there – policies Governor Hochul herself admitted were “bigoted.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cbsnews.com/newyork/news/gov-kathy-hochul-urges-suburban-county-executives-to-reject-bigoted-policies-welcome-asylum-seekers/>

3. **Mayor Adams made some welcome progress in increasing supported exits from shelters** when compared to the previous year, but **the numbers are still vastly short of what is needed** to reverse an increasing shelter census. **Governor Hochul failed decisively in meeting the State’s obligation to create a resettlement plan** for new arrivals.
- **Households exiting shelters with City-funded vouchers increased by about 30 percent over the previous year, from 6,006 in FY22 to 7,883 in FY23** – but the FY22 figure represented a four-year low. While we are pleased to see DSS putting effort into addressing some of the bureaucratic obstacles to accessing and using these vouchers, we are still seeing **significant delays in the processing of CityFHEPS vouchers, and Mayor Adams’ refusal to implement the full expansion of CityFHEPS passed by the City Council last year is an unacceptable obstacle** to the broader use of this critical resource for reducing homelessness.
  - **Placements into supportive housing in FY23 increased by 23 percent over the previous year, from 1,296 to 1,558**, but the number in FY22 was the second lowest in nine years. **FY23’s supportive housing placements were in fact 27 percent lower than in FY14, and far lower than is sufficient given the level of need.**
  - **There was a 17 percent increase in the number of shelter residents placed into set-aside units, from 2,175 to 2,537**, continuing a modest upward trend. However, the increase in placements is **not even close to keeping up with the increase in the number of homeless longer-term New Yorkers in shelters.**
  - **The number of homeless households placed into NYCHA public housing in FY23, 650, hit its lowest level in recent memory**, and was roughly one-third the number of households placed in FY19.
  - By May 2024, Governor Hochul had placed only **376 new arrival families in housing through her failed Migrant Resettlement Assistance Program (“MRAP”)** - far lower than the formal target of 1,250 and informal target of 2,500.
  - **Governor Hochul failed to create, fund, and implement the badly needed comprehensive statewide decompression and resettlement program.**

4. Given the **near absence of any available affordable housing in New York City and increasing homelessness**, the modest increase in the production of supportive housing and set-asides in FY23, while welcome, was a tiny fraction of what is needed to address the crisis.

- According to the most recent Housing Vacancy Survey, **the vacancy rate for apartments renting for less than \$1,100 per month is only 0.39 percent.**
- The City **completed 290 more supportive housing units in FY23 than in FY22** – 1,197 versus 907 – a modest increase, but given that there were 8,235 people eligible for support housing in FY23, this is far below what is required to meet the level of need.
- The City **financed 1,449, or 63 percent, more set-aside units in FY23 than in FY22** – from 2,305 to 3,574. The City **completed 694, or 35 percent, more set-aside units in FY23 than in FY22** – from 1,957 to 2,651. These are welcome increases, but again, given that as of April 2024 there are roughly 66,000 homeless longer-term New Yorkers in shelters, this is insufficient to meaningfully reduce the shelter census.

Because there were so many issues involving shelter capacity, access, conditions, and exits in the past year, *State of the Homeless 2024* is limiting its focus to those main topics. This is not to suggest that there were not critical issues around unsheltered homelessness. In fact, most of the problems highlighted in last year's *State of the Homeless 2023*<sup>3</sup> are ongoing and are issues that we plan to address in future reports.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/StateoftheHomeless2023.pdf>

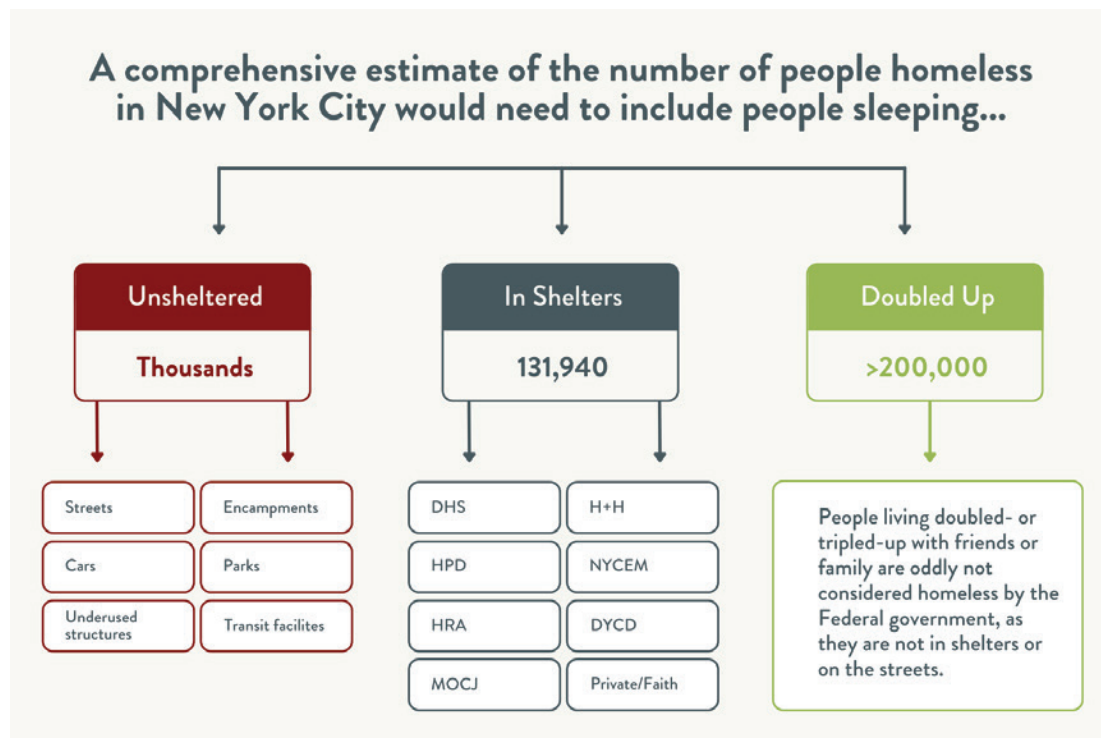


# THE SCOPE OF HOMELESSNESS IN NYC

Every year, the Coalition for the Homeless releases its *State of the Homeless* report in order to present an accurate summary of the true scope of homelessness in New York City, to provide some context for the crisis, and to forward recommendations to the City and State for addressing the situation.

Understanding the “true scope of homelessness” in New York City, however, is not a simple matter, as homelessness takes many forms, and people do what they need to do to survive. Some of those survival strategies are visible and quantifiable, but many are less so. Counting the number of people without homes has therefore always been a tricky proposition.

However, since New York City has a legal Right to Shelter for all homeless individuals and families, and since the City is obligated to track how many beds it is providing and how many people are sleeping in those beds each night, the municipal shelter census has provided relatively accurate and comparable data over the past four decades. But it is critical to remember that the shelter census does not represent the total number of people who are homeless in NYC. It represents only the number of people in shelters at a given time.<sup>4</sup> Because of the legal requirement that the shelter system must expand to meet the level of need, the shelter census serves as a useful proxy for tracking the trajectory of the homelessness crisis over time – but again, it must not be confused for a representation of the full scope of homelessness in NYC. That number must include those who are sleeping unsheltered (in the myriad ways people do) and those who are homeless but sleeping temporarily doubled- or tripled-up in overcrowded conditions with friends or family.



As of April, 2024

**Image Description:** A flowchart labeled “A comprehensive estimate of the number of people homeless in New York City would need to include people sleeping...” with three arrows pointing to three separate boxes, each with one of the following: “Unsheltered (Thousands)”, “In Shelters (131,940)” and “Doubled Up (>200,000)”. Under the Unsheltered box are two arrows pointing to six boxes, each with one of the following words/phrases: Streets, Encampments, Cars, Parks, Underused structures, and Transit facilities. Under the In Shelters box are two arrows pointing to eight boxes, each with one of the following acronyms/phrases: DHS, H+H, HPD, NYCEM, HRA, DYCD, MOCJ, and Private/Faith. Under the Doubled Up box is a single arrow pointing to a box with the following statement: “People living doubled- or tripled up with friends or families are oddly not considered homeless by the Federal government, as they are not in shelters or on the streets”.

<sup>4</sup> Three types of shelter census data are commonly used: 1) point-in-time (“PIT”) counts, 2) the average nightly census over a given month, and 3) total unique shelter users over some period of time (such as a month or year). Furthermore, the NYC Dept. of Education looks at it from the other direction, estimating how many NYC public students slept in a shelter (or experienced homelessness in some other way) at any point over the course of a school year. All such methods of estimating the scope of homelessness are useful.

While the City provides generally reliable figures for the number of people sleeping in shelters, estimates of people sleeping unsheltered or doubled-up are harder to come by. However, it would be reasonable to estimate that, all told, **there are currently at least 350,000 people in NYC without homes.**

There is, unfortunately, no reliable estimate of the number of those sleeping unsheltered. The City's annual HOPE survey mandated by the Federal government underestimates the true size of this population as its methodology is flawed<sup>5</sup> and, as it is a point-in-time survey, it does not capture the very dynamic nature of unsheltered homelessness. Whatever the figure reported by the City,<sup>6</sup> we can safely assume the true number of homeless people sleeping unsheltered to be far higher.

The exact number of people living doubled-up or tripled-up is also difficult to determine precisely, but could be estimated to exceed 200,000 given that the American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample analyzed by the National Low-Income Housing Coalition estimated<sup>7</sup> the number of people living doubled-up throughout New York State to be 299,162 in 2021, and PIT surveys indicate that NYC had about 89 percent of the state's share of homelessness in 2021.

Thus, when we talk about “the true scope of homelessness in New York City,” the figure we should keep in mind is not the HOPE estimate, nor is it the roughly 89,906 people in shelters operated by the Department of Homeless Services (“DHS”) and the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (“HPD”) in April 2024, which is the number that had been historically tracked and cited. It should include everyone who would (and should) be housed if not for the **catastrophic lack of affordable housing in New York**, a lack that is exacerbated by official neglect toward, underinvestment in, and bureaucratic obstacles hindering access to resources for people in need.

**The figure bears repeating: More than 350,000 people in our city are currently without homes.** That sobering statistic helps put into context the dire need for policy solutions that do more than tinker around the edges, and that are targeted specifically to those most in need. Yes, New York's obscenely high housing costs impact every person who lives here, rich and poor alike. But if history has taught us one thing, it's that “**trickle down**” housing policies do not work. Relief must be targeted where it is needed most.

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5 <https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/how-many-total-people-are-homeless-in-nyc/>

6 4,042 in January 2023.

7 <https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Quantifying-Doubled-Up-Homelessness.pdf>

This is evidenced in the DHS historical shelter census,<sup>8</sup> where we see that the only time the census leveled off for a sustained period was in the years following Mayor Koch's commitment of a full 10 percent of his affordable housing plan *specifically* for homeless households. And more recently, we saw the precipitous decrease in the shelter census while the pandemic-era eviction moratoria were in effect. The conclusion that we can reduce homelessness by 1) helping homeless people access housing and 2) keeping at-risk households in their homes should not really come as a shock. But of course, the solutions to mass homelessness have never really been in question; only the City's and State's willingness to implement those solutions is.

Given that the unchecked growth in mass homelessness within New York and the increase in the number of new arrivals coming here from other nations have created a compounding crisis that has played out most dramatically in the shelter system, this report places particular focus on how the Mayor's and Governor's actions have impacted that system, and those who rely on it to survive. But while the legal Right to Shelter is fundamental to New York's approach to homelessness, the end goal is, and must always be, to help all without homes stabilize in permanent housing – whether they are currently in shelters or surviving in some other makeshift way, and whatever their country of origin or immigration status. Because, in one of the richest cities in the world, and in a state where the constitution asserts the government's responsibility for addressing need, there is simply no reason for anyone to be homeless.

*The solutions to mass homelessness have never really been in question; only the City's and State's willingness to implement those solutions is.*

*State of the Homeless 2024* will examine the performance of Mayor Adams and Governor Hochul in the areas of shelter capacity, access, conditions, and exits.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/dhs-hpd-census/>



# PROVIDING SHELTER TO ALL IN NEED

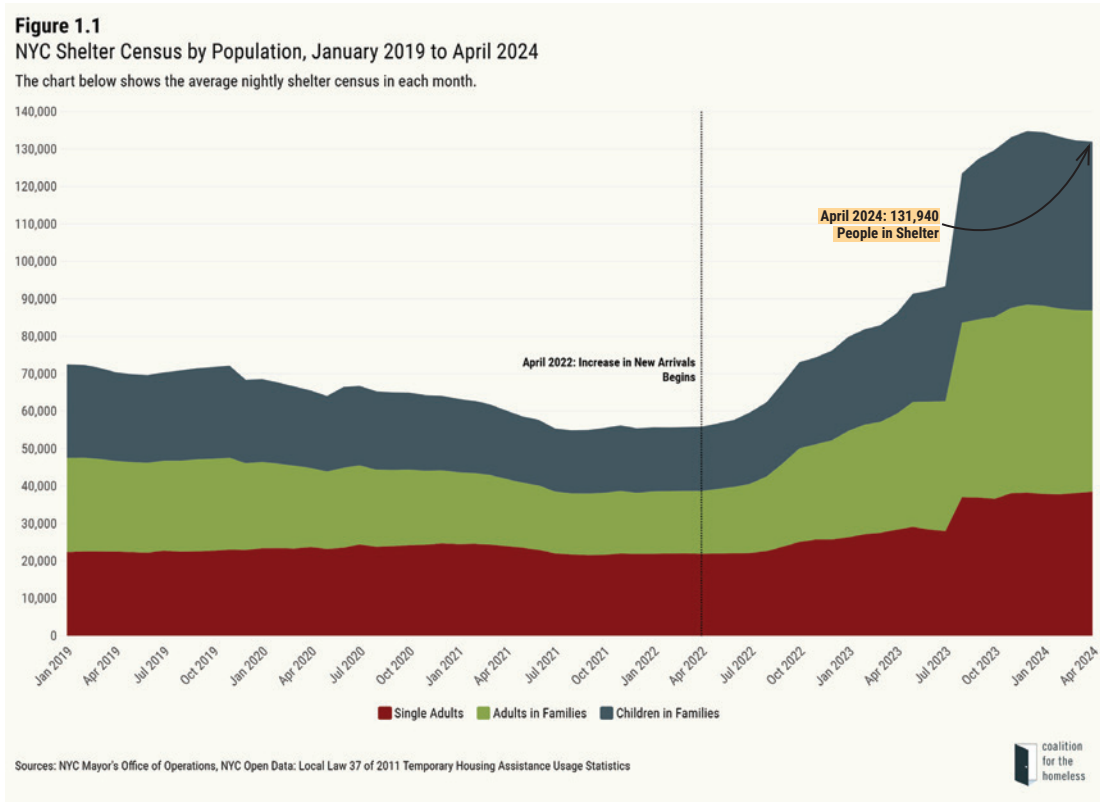
**Image description:** An adult and a child stand in front of a metallic wall. The adult is wearing a hoodie and scarf, while the child is wearing a down jacket, hair swept to the right. Both are looking towards the camera with neutral expressions.

# PROVIDING SHELTER TO ALL IN NEED

## A. THE SHELTER CAPACITY CRISIS

Over the past year, New York’s legal Right to Shelter has been tested as never before. Even as 2023 began, the city had been experiencing a dramatic increase in the number of people in need of shelter as a result of the expiration of pandemic-era eviction protections and the rapid increase in the number of new arrivals coming to NYC. The increased inflow into shelters was unfortunately not matched by adequate efforts to increase the number of people exiting shelters into stable housing. And so, while 2023 started with roughly 80,000 people sleeping in shelters each night, by December the figure had increased by 68 percent, to more than 134,000.

**Figure 1.1**



**Image Description:** A stacked area graph labeled, “NYC Shelter Census by Population, January 2019 to April 2024.” The vertical axis lists numbers 0 to 140,000 in increments of 10,000. The horizontal axis shows a time range between January 2019 and April 2024 in three month increments. There is also a vertical dashed line above April 2022, with a label saying “April 2022: Increase in New Arrivals Begins.” The graph depicts a three-color area that breaks down the overall shelter population between single adults in red at the bottom, adults in families in green in the middle, and children in families in dark blue on top. In January 2019, there are 22,348 single adults, 25,200 adults in families, and 24,963 children in families. There is an arrow pointing to the top of the slope at the end of the chart, saying “April 2024: 131,940 People in Shelter.” In April 2024, there are 38,521 single adults, 48,358 adults in families, and 45,061 children in families.

*Note: The chart above goes back only to 2019, as that is when the City began providing consistent and comparable data on all shelter systems.*

The City did not begin providing disaggregated census data on the new arrivals placed into City shelters until July 2023. In the roughly 15 months leading up to July 2023, the increase in the number of both new arrivals and homeless longer-term New Yorkers in shelters is reflected only in the surge in the DHS shelter census.

Mayor Adams’ administration deserves credit for quickly adding so much shelter capacity in their efforts to remain compliant with New York’s legal Right to Shelter – efforts that received little support from Governor Hochul (which will be discussed in more detail below).

In order to create more emergency beds for the large number of new arrivals – thousands of whom were bused to NYC by Texas Governor Greg Abbot in order to force a change in national immigration policy, score political points, and shift the cost of providing emergency relief to people in need from his state to New York – the Mayor created a somewhat ad hoc system of shelters for new arrivals operated by DHS, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (“HPD”),<sup>9</sup> NYC Health and Hospitals (“H+H”), NYC Emergency Management (“NYCEM”), and the Department of Youth and Community Renewal (“DYCD”). Roughly half of the new arrivals have been placed in shelters operated by DHS (mostly in “sanctuary hotels”), and the other half are in crisis shelters (HERCCs, respite centers, etc.) operated by the other City agencies.

The large number of new arrivals coming to NYC created shelter capacity concerns throughout 2023. As seen in Figure 1.2, the number of new arrivals entering the shelter system each week has dropped to lower levels in 2024 – about half the rate seen in the second half of 2023.

While we cannot predict the future, what is known is that, at the time of the writing of this report, the City reports that more than 200,000 new arrivals have come to NYC since March 2022, and that by the end of April 2024, 65,731 were in shelters operated by the City.

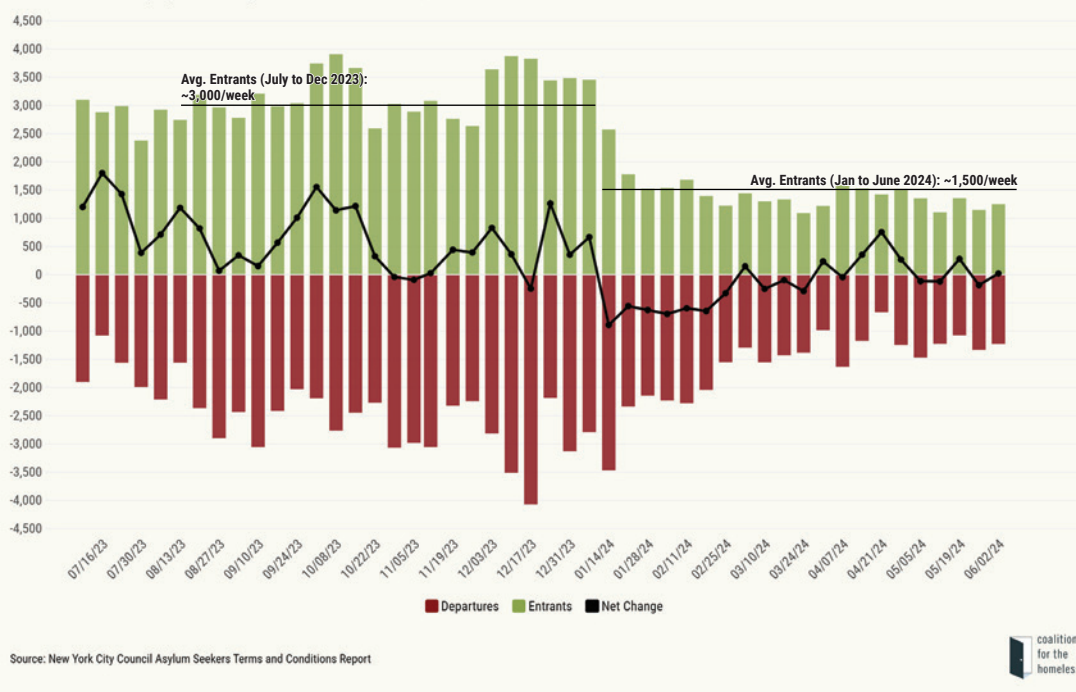
**Figure 1.2**

**Image Description:** A combination line graph and stacked bar chart labeled “New Arrival Entrants and Departures in NYC Shelters by Week, July 2023 to June 2024.” The vertical axis shows the number of New Arrivals who entered or exited shelter from -4,500 to 4,500 in increments of 500. The horizontal axis shows the week of entrance or exit from 7/16/23 to 6/2/24 in increments of two weeks, although the data begins on 7/9/23. The stacked bars above each week are divided into two sections: a green section on top represents all the entrants for that week in positive numbers and a red section on the bottom represents all the departures for that week in negative numbers. On top of these bars is a line graph in black, which represents the net change for that week (entrants minus departures). There are also two horizontal lines that each represent the average number of weekly entrants for a given time period. The line to the left lies at the 3,000 person level between 7/9/23 and 12/31/23 and is labeled “Avg. Entrants (July to Dec 2023): ~3,000/week.” The line to the right lies at the 1,500 person level between 1/7/24 and 6/2/24 and is labeled “Avg. Entrants (Jan to June 2024): ~1,500/week.”

**Figure 1.2**

**New Arrival Entrants and Departures in NYC Shelters by Week, July 2023 to June 2024**

The chart below shows the number of New Arrivals who entered or departed from the NYC shelter system. “New Arrivals” refers to people who immigrated to the US after March 15, 2022.



<sup>9</sup> HPD has transferred operational responsibility for its crisis shelters for new arrivals to the Office of Housing Recovery Operations (“HRO”).

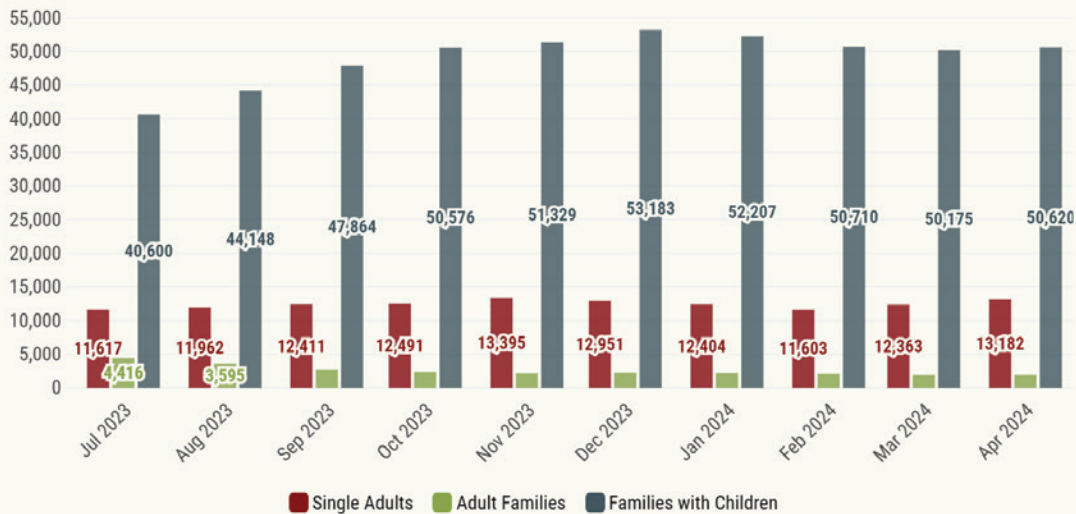
Figure 1.3

**Image Description:** A triple bar chart labeled “New Arrivals Shelter Census by Population, July 2023 to April 2024.” The vertical axis lists numbers from 0 to 55,000 in increments of 5,000. The horizontal axis shows a time range between July 2023 to April 2024 in increments of one month. Above each month are three bars: a red bar to the left which represents single adults, a green bar in the middle which represents adult families, and a dark blue bar to the right which represents families with children. The numbers for April 2024 show a New Arrival shelter census of 50,620 for families with children, 1,929 for adult families, and 13,182 for single adults.

Figure 1.3

### New Arrivals Shelter Census by Population, July 2023 to April 2024

The chart below shows the number of individual New Arrivals in the NYC shelter system. “New Arrivals” refers to people who immigrated to the US after March 15, 2022.



Source: New York City Council Asylum Seekers Terms and Conditions Report



While the influx of new arrivals was dominating public dialogue around the need for shelter and services throughout 2023, the number of homeless longer-term New Yorkers in shelters was getting less attention, even though it also increased rapidly from a level that was already alarmingly high. The number of homeless longer-term New Yorkers in shelters was 55,702 in March 2022, just before the influx of new arrivals began, and by April of 2024 had **increased by 19 percent, to 66,209.**

This increase is all the more alarming because it comes on the heels of two years of decreasing shelter censuses that resulted from pandemic-era protections that demonstrated that tools like rental vouchers and eviction protection work to help families and individuals access or remain in permanent housing.

## B. CITY AND STATE RESPONSES TO THE SHELTER CAPACITY CRISIS

The responses by Mayor Adams and Governor Hochul to the shelter capacity crisis were focused more on seeking to reduce government obligation than on rising to meet the challenge. As stated above, it has to be acknowledged that the City did quickly bring tens of thousands of new beds online at significant effort, coordination, and expense. But it also must be noted that the City was legally required to do so – and concurrently tried very hard to relieve itself of that legal requirement. The Mayor’s and Governor’s responses to the crisis can generally be divided into five broad categories:

1. Challenging *Callahan*
2. Creating deterrents to shelter
3. Public spin
4. Ignoring solutions
5. Absence of State leadership

### 1. Challenging Callahan

Rather than addressing the shelter capacity crisis through the obvious steps of helping more shelter residents move into permanent housing and increasing homeless prevention efforts, Mayor Adams and Governor Hochul attempted to dismantle New York’s legal Right to Shelter established in 1981 under the *Callahan* consent decree. On May 23, 2023, the City submitted a letter to the court requesting permission to submit a motion to modify *Callahan* – effectively seeking to end the City’s obligation to provide shelter to all homeless adults without minor children. The Mayor’s rationale was based upon two faulty premises: first, that the City needed more flexibility than allowed under *Callahan* in responding to the influx of new arrivals; and second, that removing or limiting *Callahan* would result in fewer new arrivals coming to New York.

Neither reason was defensible, as the City and advocates had already been engaged in good-faith negotiations for more than a year about how to provide shelter quickly for the new arrivals. The City, in fact, had all the flexibility it needed to utilize facilities that were not strictly compliant with *Callahan* rules, but that still kept people safe.

The second assertion, that eliminating the Right to Shelter would stop the inflow of new arrivals, failed to acknowledge New York’s global status as a city that for hundreds of years has attracted people from all over the world because of economic opportunity, kinship networks, cultural diversity, and tolerance.

Governor Hochul fully and formally supported the Mayor’s effort to eviscerate *Callahan*, while also continually asserting that the State is not a party to the consent decree. Interestingly, in August 2023, State Attorney General Latitia James withdrew from representing the State in the challenge to *Callahan* – an extremely rare move for an AG. Governor Hochul thus had to engage a private law firm to represent the State in the action.



The City revised its request to the court twice, with the most recent request outlining a modification to *Callahan* that would have impacted both new arrivals and longer-term New Yorkers. Under the last proposed modification, the City argued it should condition shelter on public assistance eligibility, which would have meant that low wage workers and those receiving disability benefits could have been turned away from shelter. The result of such a change would have been a massive increase in the number of people relegated to sleeping on the streets, in the transit system, and in other public spaces.

The parties entered into court-supervised mediation in October 2023, and signed a stipulation of settlement<sup>10</sup> on March 15, 2024 that preserved the core elements of the consent decree, but allowed the City to temporarily place some conditions on the provision of shelter to new arrivals. Notably, the State did not sign the settlement agreement.

In the ten-month period during which the legal challenge was taking place, the City was frequently out of compliance with *Callahan*.

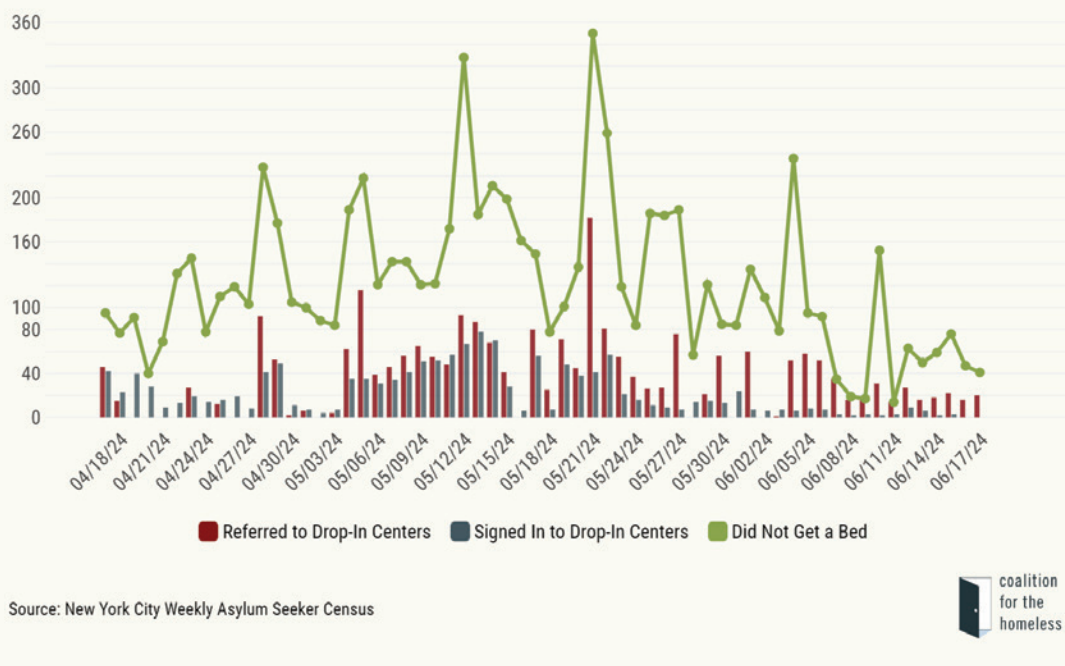
For example, at the end of July 2023, the City failed to make enough shelter beds available for new arrivals seeking assistance at the Arrival Center established by H&H in the Roosevelt Hotel, resulting in dozens of people sleeping on the sidewalk for several nights. The situation – widely covered by the press – precipitated an emergency court conference, which resulted in the City quickly putting more shelter beds online. At the time of the incident, there was in fact sufficient capacity in the DHS shelter system to provide the needed beds. Some publicly questioned whether the Mayor had intentionally allowed new arrivals to sleep unsheltered in public in order to send a message that would deter more new arrivals from coming to NYC.

Figure 1.4

**Image Description:** A combination line graph and double-bar chart labeled “Adult New Arrivals Seeking Shelter Who Did Not Get Bed Assignments, April 17, 2024 to June 17, 2024.” The vertical axis lists numbers of individuals from 0 to 360 in increments of 20. The horizontal axis shows a time range between 4/18/24 and 6/17/24 in increments of two days, although the data itself is broken out at the daily level and begins on 4/17/24. At the top, above each day, is a line graph in green, which represents the number of adult New Arrivals who did not get a bed placement. Directly above each day, are two bars: a dark blue bar to the left which represents the number of adult New Arrivals who were referred to drop-in centers and a red bar to the right which represents the number of adult New Arrivals who signed in to drop-in centers.

Figure 1.4

Adult New Arrivals Seeking Shelter Who Did Not Get Bed Assignments, April 17, 2024 to June 17, 2024



<sup>10</sup> <https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/callahan-settlement-preserves-the-right-to-shelter-while-implementing-temporary-measures-during-the-humanitarian-crisis/>

The shortage of shelter beds for adult new arrivals created a state of ongoing noncompliance that delayed the *Callahan* settlement process. Throughout the winter of 2023-2024, the City maintained that it simply had no more beds available for adult new arrivals and, given that the continued pleas to the State to help the City find 1,000 more shelter beds fell on deaf ears, the City relied on “overflow sites” – facilities similar to drop-in centers, without beds or showers, where new arrivals waited for as long as two weeks for a bed. As a result, the March 2024 *Callahan* stipulation of settlement required the City to cease using such drop-in centers as shelters by April 8, 2024. Since then, constant pressure has been required to force the City to bring on more capacity needed for compliance, as the City was unable to comply by April 8th.

The City has also only just begun implementing the new rules under the settlement agreement defining shelter stays for adult new arrivals, and the Coalition, Legal Aid Society, and other advocates are carefully monitoring the City’s actions.

## 2. Creating Deterrents to Shelter

At the same time that the City and State were attempting to dismantle the legal Right to Shelter through the courts, Mayor Adams was able to use his executive authority to implement time limits on shelter placements for new arrivals in order to push people out of shelters. In July 2023, the Mayor imposed 60-day limits on shelter placements for single adult new arrivals, which in September were reduced to 30 days. Then in October, the City announced it would impose 60-day limits on shelter placements for new arrival families with children in non-DHS shelters – a move that led to an outpouring of outrage and concern from advocates, providers, and elected officials because of, among other things, the severely destabilizing effect on children.

*Shelter limits have functioned as a de facto denial of shelter to people desperately in need of safety and stability.*

The shelter limits mean that any new arrival, individual, or family requiring emergency shelter for more than 30 or 60 days, respectively, would need to vacate their current shelter placement and return to the Reticketing Center in the East Village or the Welcome Center at the Roosevelt Hotel to request a new shelter assignment – which might be in a different borough from the previous placement. Implementation of this system has resulted in roughly 75 percent of the single adults who hit the time limit and 50 percent of families with children not returning to the City’s shelters. Since the City does not track outcomes, it is not clear where those thousands of individuals have ended up. What is clear is that the shelter limits have functioned as a *de facto* denial of shelter to people desperately in need of safety and stability.<sup>11</sup>

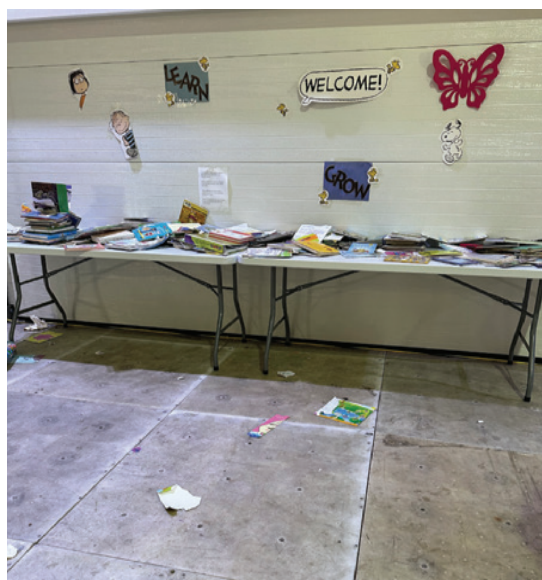
11 After implementing the 30-day limits on shelter stays, there were numerous accounts of single adult new arrivals waiting weeks for a new shelter placement and having to sleep overnight in chairs and on the floors of overflow sites or in the subways.  
<https://www.thecity.nyc/2023/12/18/nyc-right-to-shelter-no-longer-exists/>

In addition to the shelter limits, in November 2023 the City also began placing families with children in “semi-congregate” settings<sup>12</sup> that were (and remain) wholly inappropriate for such households, including in massive tents erected in Floyd Bennett Field at a remote edge of Brooklyn. Upon inspection of the shelter facility at Floyd Bennett Field, which is paid for by the State, one expert in family health<sup>13</sup> noted:

The two most troubling issues are the remote sanitation<sup>14</sup> and the geographic isolation<sup>15</sup> that residents face. These conditions are likely to cause substantial stress, particularly for stays of anything longer than a week or two. The sanitation issue, combined with the lack of sound isolation, has the potential to disrupt sleep; lack of adequate sleep is a major threat to health, in any setting but particularly one in which families are facing many other stressors. Geographical isolation may affect children’s ability to focus in school, and will likely [impact] migrants’ efforts to gain employment and otherwise gain independence.

Another less acute but not insignificant issue is ventilation. The set-up is, despite the presence of walls at eye level, essentially an open format. In these conditions, common respiratory viruses are more likely to spread, particularly during the winter season. These viruses are unlikely to cause serious illness, but cumulatively they can affect children’s schooling and families’ stress level.

Despite such objections and requests from advocates to use this space for single adult new arrivals instead of families with children, the City continues to place families with children at Floyd Bennett Field.



**(Left) Image Description:** A photo taken at Floyd Bennett Field, an airport that has been converted into a shelter for new arrival families. It depicts a drab, concrete area with signs stuck on the wall that say “welcome”, “learn”, and “grow”, suggesting some sort of child enrichment or education space. There are two tables with a messy pile of old books in an otherwise very blank setting.

**(Right) Image Description:** A photo taken at Floyd Bennett Field, an airport that has been converted to a shelter for new arrival families. It depicts a drab, concrete “play” area, with three young children playing on a small, broken slide set that stands approximately 2 ft tall. There are two tables, one with a messy pile of books, boxes and bags, in an otherwise very blank setting.

Photos by Coalition for the Homeless

12 New York State social services law prohibits the City from placing homeless families with children in congregate shelter settings. In an interview with the press, Win Executive Director Christine Quinn quipped that “semi-congregate” is like “being a little bit pregnant.” <https://www.thecity.nyc/2023/10/23/listen-nycs-new-plan-for-migrant-families-is-like-being-a-little-bit-pregnant/>

13 Emmanuel d’Harcourt, MD MPH; Adjunct Lecturer, Department of Population and Family Health, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University.

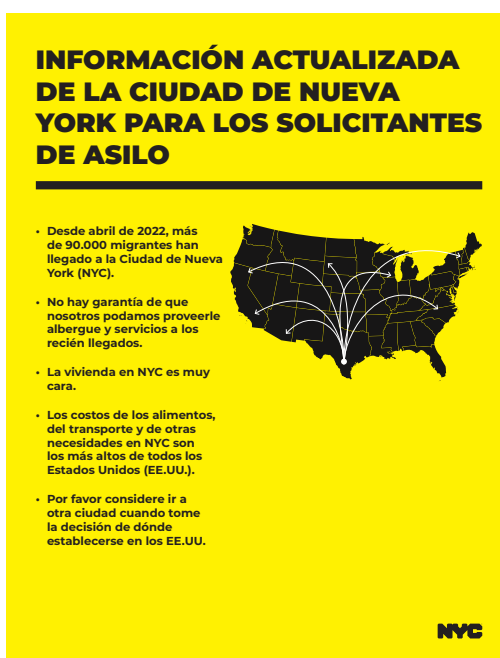
14 Per Dr. d’Harcourt, “[t]he biggest issue with sanitation, however, is that the facilities are in a separate building from the pods where families sleep, requiring walking outdoors from one to the other. This is a potential problem in cold or otherwise inclement weather, and at night, especially with families with young children. Children and their caregivers facing this additional obstacle may be more likely to retain urine, with negative consequences; and/or to have disrupted sleep because of the effort involved in toilet use at night.”

15 Per Dr. d’Harcourt, “the shelter is far from urban population centers, schools, and potential employers. The city has made efforts to address this issue, scheduling round-the-clock bus shuttles to Coney Island and other major transit centers, and organizing busing to various schools. These substantial -and expensive- efforts notwithstanding, families still are effectively marooned, having to wait up to two hours for the shuttles, which still leave them with substantial commute times into more densely areas of the city. Some of the residents prefer to walk the 15-30 minutes to the nearest bus stop, where they also face substantial waits.”

### 3. Public Spin

In addition to his efforts to undermine the legal Right to Shelter, throughout 2023, Mayor Adams frequently chose to use the mayoral bully pulpit as a platform for alarmist political theatrics. Some examples include:

- Traveling to Latin America and the Darien Gap, and printing flyers (pictured below) to be handed out at the southern border stating “there is no guarantee we will be able to provide shelter and services to new arrivals;”
- Publicly musing about distributing tents<sup>16</sup> to new arrivals instead of providing shelter, while also threatening to place new arrivals on Rikers Island and on decommissioned cruise ships;
- Touting a \$12 billion estimate as the cost of addressing the “asylum seeker crisis,” without providing any real basis<sup>17</sup> for the estimate; and,
- Using xenophobic rhetoric,<sup>18</sup> stating the new arrivals influx “will destroy New York City.”



(Left) Image Description: A bright yellow flyer in English titled “Updates to Asylum Seekers From the City of New York.” There are five bullet points with statements that include “There is no guarantee we will be able to provide shelter and services to new arrivals” and “Please consider another city as you make your decision about where to settle in the U.S.” The NYC logo features in the bottom-right of the flyer.

(Right) Image Description: A bright yellow flyer in Spanish, titled “Información Actualizada de la Ciudad de Nueva York Para Los Solicitantes de Asilo.” There are five bullet points with statements that include “No hay garantía de que nosotros podamos proveerle albergue y servicios a los recién llegados” and “Por favor considere ir a otra ciudad cuando tome la decisión de dónde establecerse en los EE.UU.”

Similarly, Governor Hochul, in one of her many public statements<sup>19</sup> around needing to curtail the Right to Shelter, attempted to frame the right as “an open invitation to 8 billion people who live on this planet.”

These somewhat clumsy and ineffective tactics did nothing to alleviate the crisis, and made New Yorkers question why the Mayor and Governor were not taking more concrete steps to reduce the shelter census in productive ways.<sup>20</sup>

16 <https://www.wsj.com/us-news/new-york-migrant-shelters-tents-24290d6b>

17 <https://gothamist.com/news/nycs-tab-for-migrants-budget-watchdog-says-itll-sting-less-than-forecast>

18 <https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/646-23/transcript-mayor-adams-hosts-community-conversation>

19 <https://www.nydailynews.com/2023/10/12/hochul-says-right-to-shelter-cant-be-open-invitation-to-8-billion-people/>

20 New Yorkers have been largely dissatisfied with both Adams and Hochul on their handling of the new arrival situation and homelessness. A Sienna College poll (<https://static.politico.com/ab/4c/2e23de284e05aa668a40396aa6c3/sny0823-crosstabs.pdf>) of registered New York State voters conducted a few months after the Mayor and Governor launched their attack on the legal Right to Shelter found that a significant number of New Yorkers disapproved of both leaders’ handling of the new arrival situation, giving disapproval ratings of 47 percent and 51 percent to the Mayor and Governor, respectively. Similarly, a Quinnipiac poll (<https://poll.qu.edu/poll-release?releaseid=3886>) of registered New York City voters months after the Mayor implemented the 30-day shelter limits showed across all demographics and political parties, 54 percent to 80 percent disapproval for the Mayor’s handling of the “surge of migrants” and 63 percent to 79 percent disapproval for his handling of homelessness generally.

#### 4. Ignoring Solutions

Given the dire need for more shelter capacity, it is not clear why the Mayor did not take more aggressive steps to help more homeless longer-term New Yorkers transition from shelter into permanent housing using tools that were already available. The concrete recommendations provided by The Legal Aid Society, Coalition for the Homeless, and other advocates included urging the Mayor to:

- Promptly connect new arrivals to available immigration relief that would have put them on a pathway to employment much sooner, enabling them to move out of shelter much earlier and reducing the need for shelter capacity – the City waited for more than a year (until the summer of 2023) to begin such an effort;
- Assist new arrivals in obtaining work permits and jobs that would allow them to exit shelter;
- Rapidly implement effective case management services at all new arrival shelter sites that could have enabled people to move out of shelter earlier and reduced the need for shelter capacity;
- Make use of federal properties outside of NYC that the federal government had offered for shelter capacity;
- Make use of State properties outside of NYC that could be used for shelter capacity;
- Make use of all available properties in NYC that could be used for shelter capacity;
- Address the need for additional rental assistance and homeless prevention efforts to avert and abbreviate shelter stays for longer-term New Yorkers, which would reduce the need for shelter and free up existing shelter capacity;
- Provide adequate staffing in City offices and programs that new arrivals and longer-term New Yorkers alike rely on to avoid and exit shelter, including those charged with processing subsidies that enable households to move from shelter to permanent housing;
- Support the full implementation of the recent reforms to CityFHEPS, and expand CityFHEPS to include more New Yorkers than those served by the current narrow program;
- Rebuild, and adequately fund, the NYC Commission on Human Rights’ Income Discrimination Unit to hold landlords, real estate agents, and brokerage agents accountable for unlawfully denying placements to housing voucher holders;
- Expand the City’s shelter capacity by not canceling or delaying planned shelter openings; and
- Train all local shelter providers on how to screen for benefits and employment eligibility.

**Such actions, had they been embraced by the City, would have helped countless homeless households secure permanent housing while freeing up desperately-needed shelter capacity to help address the humanitarian crisis.** Instead, Mayor Adams chose to largely ignore the recommendations, even going so far as to claim that advocates were failing to “come up with some tangible ideas”<sup>21</sup> – regardless of the fact that the recommendations were both submitted to his administration in writing and were widely publicized.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/788-23/transcript-mayor-adams-holds-in-person-media-availability>

## 5. Absence of State Leadership

Traditionally, refugee resettlement is a State responsibility, carried out with Federal coordination and support. When new arrivals began arriving in significant numbers in 2022, Governor Hochul should have immediately deployed resources to NYC – including setting up an operational hub in the Port Authority Terminal, where most people were then arriving – to oversee and coordinate relief, shelter, and resettlement efforts. The Governor, however, took great pains to frame the issue as primarily New York City’s responsibility, and limited the type and amount of support the State would provide.

The aid that was provided by the State, while critical, was generally characterized by the Governor’s administration as an act of largesse, rather than as an obligation or duty.

It includes:

- Helping push the Federal government to extend Temporary Protected Status (“TPS”) to Venezuelans who arrived in the country before July 31, 2023, thus making an estimated 15,000 new arrivals in New York eligible for TPS and, in turn, work authorizations;
- Deploying the National Guard to help staff the newly opened shelter facilities for new arrivals;
- Providing funding for legal and case management staff in the shelters for new arrivals;
- Providing funding for health screening and vaccinations for new arrivals;
- Making a few State-owned sites available for use by the City as shelter facilities;
- Designating more State funds to help address the ongoing crisis (roughly \$2.4B in the current fiscal year), including funds for the use of Randall’s Island, Creedmoor Psychiatric Center, and Floyd Bennett Field as temporary shelters.

While these efforts were helpful, what was needed in a crisis of such magnitude was leadership, coordination, operational involvement, and a commitment of far more resources. Instead, Governor Hochul’s response was marked by a series of actions that underscored her reticence to take a true leadership role in meeting the needs of the new arrivals. These include:

- Cooperation with Mayor Adams in the attempt to dismantle New York’s legal Right to Shelter, which over the past 43 years has given more than one million people without homes a way off the streets and has served as a basis of New York’s response to mass homelessness;
- Continued failure to design and implement a comprehensive statewide decompression and resettlement plan that would utilize the authority and resources of the State to 1) ensure that no one is denied their legal Right to Shelter, and 2) help new arrivals move from shelters into housing and stability;
- Refusal to exercise her authority under NY Executive Law 29-a to invalidate executive orders in roughly 30 counties throughout the state that refused to accept new arrivals – orders that she herself described as “bigoted policies based on fear and intimidation”<sup>22</sup> – marking a shameful failure in moral leadership. By allowing these discriminatory barriers to stand, Governor Hochul effectively condoned the application of xenophobic, racist policies that are inconsistent with New York’s values – and which exacerbated the city’s shelter capacity crisis;
- Refusal to help NYC secure more shelter capacity while individuals with nowhere to sleep were being relegated to the streets or, at best, to sleep in chairs in drop-in centers;
- Refusal to take on any operational responsibilities in the new facilities rapidly being opened to provide emergency shelter for new arrivals, adding even more stress to the City’s operations;
- Failure to put adequate attention or resources into MRAP, which was intended to help 1,250 to 2,500 new arrival families quickly move from shelters into permanent housing throughout the state. After nearly a full year, MRAP had moved fewer than 400 families into housing, and State officials publicly referred to the program as “a disappointment,”<sup>23</sup> even though they have refused to follow recommendations from advocates and providers to improve the program; and
- Lack of follow-up or transparency around the State Jobs Portal, which the Governor claimed has nearly 40,000 jobs listed for new arrivals. The State claims<sup>24</sup> that more than 11,000 new arrivals have been referred to jobs, but is unable to confirm whether a single person has obtained employment or been able to move out of shelter because of a job.

**Mayor Adams’ and Governor Hochul’s responses to the shelter capacity crisis have thus been primarily characterized by their efforts to abrogate their moral and legal responsibilities to provide aid, care, and support to individuals and families in need.**

While the City undertook impressive efforts to quickly add tens of thousands of new shelter beds, it again must be noted that they were compelled by law to do so – a salient reminder of the vital importance of the legal Right to Shelter.

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.cbsnews.com/newyork/news/gov-kathy-hochul-urges-suburban-county-executives-to-reject-bigoted-policies-welcome-asylum-seekers/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.newsnationnow.com/us-news/immigration/migrants-pay-rent-assistance/>

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.timesunion.com/capitol/article/legal-help-accounts-5-percent-n-y-s-4b-migrants-19482596.php?oref=csny\\_firstread\\_nl](https://www.timesunion.com/capitol/article/legal-help-accounts-5-percent-n-y-s-4b-migrants-19482596.php?oref=csny_firstread_nl)

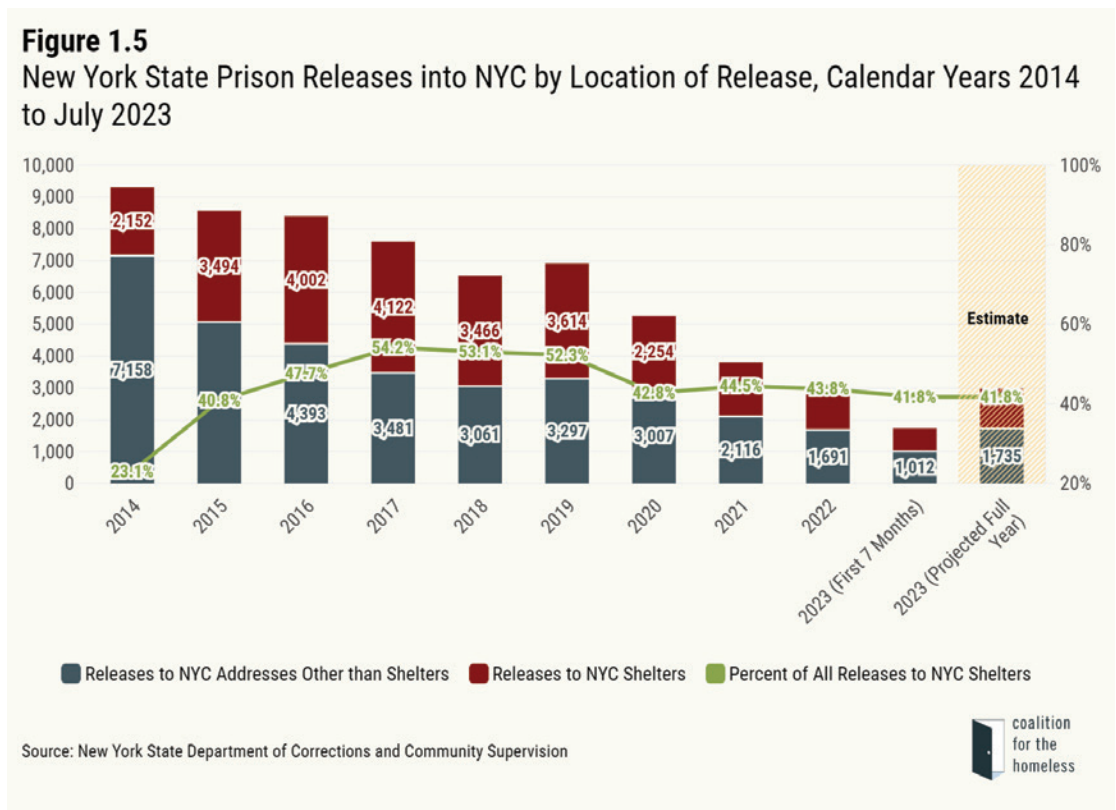
### C. CLOSING THE PRISON-TO-SHELTER PIPELINE

Among the many factors contributing to the shelter capacity crisis, one that deserves particular attention is the State’s practice of discharging individuals from prisons directly into the city’s overwhelmed shelter system.

As of July 2023, 41.8 percent of those released from state prisons were funneled into New York City shelters, a figure which represents a modest decrease from a peak of 54.2 percent in 2017, but nonetheless underscores the State’s practice of continuing the prison-to-shelter pipeline.

This trend is not merely a byproduct of systemic inefficiency; rather, it reflects deep-seated issues within the State’s reentry planning and both the City’s and State’s failure to provide access to affordable housing. While the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision asserts that it is making efforts to place individuals in alternative housing arrangements, the high percentage of those ending up in shelters over the past decade is telling.

**Figure 1.5**



**Image Description:** A combination line graph and stacked bar chart labeled “New York State Prison Releases into NYC by Location of Release, Calendar Years 2014 to July 2023.” The vertical axes show numbers of individuals from 0 to 10,000 in increments of 1,000 on the left, and percentage of people released from prison directly into shelters from 0% to 100% in increments of 20% on the right. The horizontal axis shows a time range between 2014 and July 2023. Above each year are bars in two sections: a dark blue section at the bottom shows releases to NYC addresses other than shelters, with a value of 1,012 for the first seven months of calendar year 2023, and a red section on top shows releases to NYC shelters, with a value of 726 for the first seven months of 2023. A green line marks the percentage of all releases sent to NYC shelters each year versus non-shelter addresses in NYC, with a value of 41.8% for the first seven months of calendar year 2023. Immediately to the right of this entry is the year labeled, “2023 (Projected Full Year)”. This vertical section with yellow shading and shaded stacked bar shows that full 2023 calendar year is projected to have 1,735 releases to NYC addresses other than shelters and 1,245 releases directly into NYC shelters.



Even so, beyond straining the shelter system, the government's chronic neglect in providing needed reentry planning has left many without supports in rebuilding their lives after incarceration, often resulting in extended periods within the shelter system and making it harder for formerly incarcerated people to gain employment, care for their physical and mental health, and complete parole supervision.<sup>25</sup> This failure of policy and compassion significantly impacts Black and Latino New Yorkers, who each make up a disproportionate share of both the prison system and the shelter population. As it stands, the State's inadequate discharge practices largely serve to reinforce the cycle of disadvantage and systemic bias that pervade our society.

Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach that goes far beyond temporary, piecemeal fixes. The State must enhance its reentry programs to ensure that individuals leaving prison have access to stable housing, employment support, and health services from the moment of their release – with reentry programming and planning beginning well before a person's release date. Because single adults and those entering the NYC shelter system from prisons and other institutions are not eligible for the State's FHEPS rent supplement vouchers, the State should also increase the public assistance rent allowance to match fair market rents and expand access to State FHEPS.

Passing Fair Chance for Housing on December 20, 2023 was a valuable step by the City in helping to remove a barrier to housing for this population. However, the impact of that law for those discharged from State prisons will not be realized for several years to come.

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<sup>25</sup> An evaluation of various programs using the Corporation for Supportive Housing's model for justice involved individuals, Frequent Users Systems Engagement ("FUSE"), found that supportive housing participants in FUSE programs "spent 146.7 fewer days in shelter and 19.2 fewer days incarcerated" than their comparison groups. See <https://udspace.udel.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/91e55e58-705c-4135-be81-88a7b08296a6/content>. See also, Brianna Remster, A Life Course Analysis of Homeless Shelter Use among the Formerly Incarcerated, Justice Quarterly, Nov. 30, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2017.1401653>.

## D. SHELTER ELIGIBILITY, ACCESSIBILITY, AND CONDITIONS

The shelter capacity crisis created additional significant strains to a shelter system that, as past *State of the Homeless* reports have consistently pointed out, was already rife with obstacles. The legal Right to Shelter can exist on the books at the same time that problems with shelter eligibility, accessibility, and conditions can serve as de facto denials of shelter to people in need – whether homeless longer-term New Yorkers or new arrivals.

### 1. Shelter Eligibility

PATH and AFIC

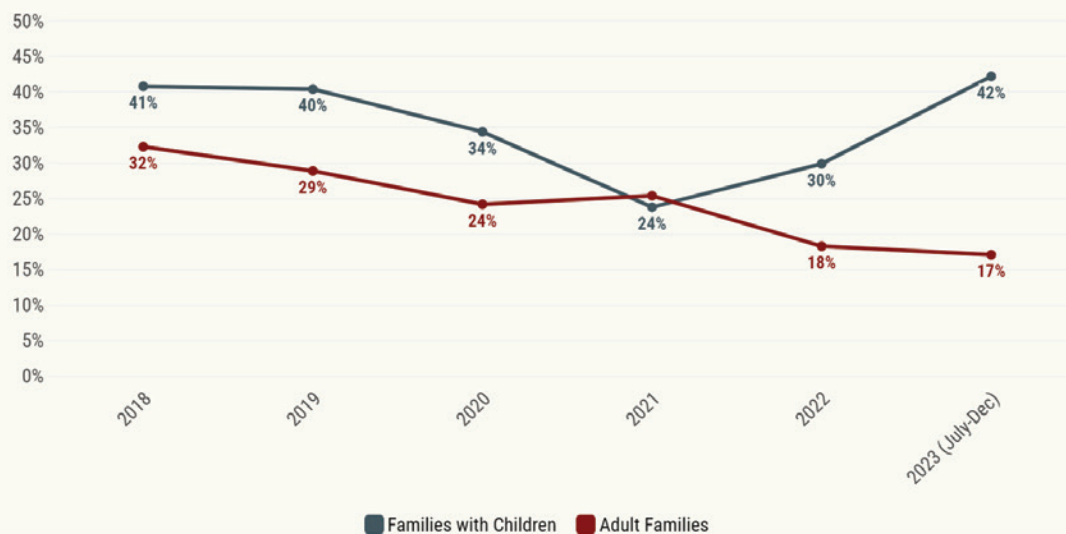
While homeless single adults need not demonstrate eligibility for shelter at the front door of the system,<sup>26</sup> families must do so, and the eligibility screening process results in many homeless families being denied shelter. Figure 1.6 shows the eligibility rates for shelter applicants at PATH (Prevention Assistance and Temporary Housing for families with minor children) and AFIC (the Adult Families Intake Center for adult families without minor children) from City FY18 through FY23.

**Figure 1.6**

**Image Description:** A line graph labeled “Average Percentage of Families Found Eligible for DHS Shelter by Population, Fiscal Years 2018 to December 2023.” The vertical axis lists percentages from 0% to 50% in increments of 5. The horizontal axis shows Fiscal Years 2018 to 2023 (July-December). Two lines mark percentages for each year in two categories: a dark blue line shows percentages for families with children with a value of 42% for 2023 (July-December) and a red line shows percentages for adult families with a value of 17% for 2023 (July-December).

**Figure 1.6**

**Average Percentage of Families Found Eligible for DHS Shelter by Population, Fiscal Years 2018 to December 2023**



Source: New York City Department of Homeless Services



<sup>26</sup> The March 15, 2024 stipulation of settlement to the City’s and State’s challenge to the *Callahan* consent decree provides that the City may deny shelter to adult new arrivals without minor children who have “another suitable housing option in the United States” or who have “sufficient income or other resources to secure their own housing accommodations.”

The percentage of adult families found eligible for shelter remains appallingly and unacceptably low, falling from 32.3 percent in 2018 to just over 17 percent in 2023. Adult families generally have higher rates of mental health issues, disabilities, and other medical needs, and face significant challenges in meeting shelter requirements at AFIC – especially in providing the documentation needed to prove familial relationships and document a one-year housing history. The latter is particularly difficult for adult families who have lived on the streets, as providing exact dates and documentation of periods of street homelessness is often impossible. The system’s rigidity fails to account for the complex realities of these families’ situations and – as demonstrated by a 17 percent eligibility rate – leaves them at a higher risk of prolonged, unsheltered homelessness.

In response to the concerns above, AFIC has been given the latitude to exercise managerial discretion in cases where it is clear that an adult family is doing everything possible to provide the required information that may, in fact, be unattainable – or may have a disability that is impacting the family’s ability to navigate the eligibility process. Such discretion is a critical, common sense solution, if a family ever receives it, as this latitude is not exercised until applicants are denied eligibility five or more times. This essentially means that a family must persist in applying for shelter for more than 50 days, through repeated denials that offer no hope of being found eligible for shelter, before such discretion is applied.

The eligibility rate for families with children went up from an all-time low of 25.4 percent during the pandemic, but it still hovers around what has become a year-to-year default level of around 40 percent. A January 9, 2024 report<sup>27</sup> issued by the NYC Department of Investigation looked into the City’s reporting of PATH eligibility rates under Mayor de Blasio, and while the report evidenced manipulation of the data by DHS that reduced the daily eligibility rate, it was determined that this did not result in any families being denied shelter.

What does, however, result in homeless families being denied shelter is the use of eligibility screens required by a State administrative directive, which excludes many shelter applicants both by design and by the often-problematic execution of the eligibility verification process at PATH and AFIC.

Pursuant to the State administrative directive, shelter eligibility under *Boston v. New York* – the litigation that established the legal Right to Shelter for families with children – is granted to homeless families “who lack alternate housing...pending the City’s eligibility determination.”<sup>28</sup> This is a very different standard than that for single adults under *Callahan*, which states that shelter must be provided to each individual who meets the need standard for public assistance or “by reason of physical, mental, or social dysfunction is in need of temporary shelter.”<sup>29</sup>

People find themselves without a roof over their heads and in need of emergency shelter and housing assistance for a myriad of reasons, and ultimately the best outcomes are achieved by helping people stay in their homes and avoid homelessness (and thus shelters) altogether or, barring that, ensuring that emergency shelter is easily accessed, is safe and appropriate, and provides the resources necessary to help shelter residents quickly transition into permanent housing and stability.

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27 <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doi/press-releases/2024/January/02DSSRelease.Rpt.01.09.2024.pdf>

28 *Boston v. City of N.Y.*, No. 402295/08 (N.Y. Sup. Ct. Sept. 17, 2008), <http://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/BostonvNewYorkFinal.pdf>

29 *Callahan v. Carey*, No. 42582/79 (N.Y. Sup. Ct. Aug. 1981), <http://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/CallahanConsentDecree.pdf>

**However, the current eligibility determination process that implements the State administrative directive results in far too many homeless families being denied shelter.**

In fact, an ongoing eligibility rate at PATH of only 40 percent and an eligibility rate of just 17 percent for AFIC suggests that the City's operation of PATH and AFIC, and the system as a whole are designed not to provide shelter to all who need it, but calibrated to limit who has access to it to keep State and City shelter costs down. Most denials are in fact based on the applicant family simply missing some information about its housing history<sup>30</sup> – a tremendously (and needlessly) bureaucratic hurdle to require of a family in extreme crisis.

Poverty takes many forms and has many indicators. Eligibility criteria for shelter and relief that are keyed to only certain of those indicators – such as having been formally evicted, fleeing domestic violence, or being able to list every place one has slept for the past years and proving those places are no longer available – routinely preclude thousands of homeless, at-risk, and impoverished households from getting the help they need.

The introduction to this report highlights the fact that hundreds of thousands of people in New York City are in fact homeless but not counted as such because they are neither in shelters nor sleeping in public spaces; they are instead sleeping temporarily doubled- or tripled-up in the homes of others – a situation that, due to the stress, instability, and discord it creates, is a frequent precursor to entering a municipal shelter. It is so many of these households that are errantly found ineligible for shelter at PATH and who, because of their situation, are also not eligible for State FHEPS or CityFHEPS rent vouchers.

The shelter eligibility rates at both AFIC and PATH are appallingly low, and we must never forget that there is a largely unseen human cost for each one of those denials.

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<sup>30</sup> Families with minor children applying for shelter at PATH have to list every place they have slept over the previous two years.

## New Arrivals

As discussed in the section above on “Creating Deterrents to Shelter,” the City’s implementation of policies requiring new arrival single adults and families to obtain new shelter placements every 30 and 60 days, respectively, reveals a strategy aimed at restricting shelter usage in order to reduce shelter costs. This is achieved by making ongoing access to shelters difficult and disruptive, regardless of the deleterious impact on the individuals.

The City has reported that between 75-80 percent of single adult new arrivals and roughly 50 percent of new arrival families with children do not return to shelter once their initial placement ends. As the City does not track outcomes of those effectively evicted from shelters, it is not known where those impacted by these policies have ended up.

But in addition to these shelter renewal policies, when the Mayor and Governor attempted to dismantle the legal Right to Shelter in order to evade their legal and moral obligations, they sought the ability to close the front door and deny shelter to new arrivals and many longer-term New Yorkers as well. As previously discussed, the Mayor and Governor were unsuccessful since the stipulation of settlement that ultimately emerged provides for a more narrowly tailored set of modifications applying only to new arrivals without minor children – and only for so long as the current crisis continues, not permanently.

More specifically, new arrivals without minor children are screened for eligibility as a condition to receiving shelter. They must prove they do not have the resources to rent their own apartment or do not have another housing option. Given the fact that those seeking shelter do not arrive in New York with income equal to 200 percent of the federal poverty level or an alternative place to stay, it is not surprising that most, if not all, applicants are initially found eligible. But with only 30 (or 60) days of shelter required to be provided by the City, the more challenging access barrier is proving that they are eligible to remain in shelter when this period ends. This can be a rather arduous and complicated process requiring evidence of a host of activities demonstrating that the new arrival is taking steps to leave shelter. Such efforts include seeking or obtaining employment or housing – steps which are challenging for anyone to achieve in such a short period of time, particularly when they lack necessary work authorization or legal status and are still dealing with the trauma of traveling to New York while also learning English and about New York.

As of this report, there is not sufficient data regarding the impact of these shelter procedures and the extension review process on new arrivals without minor children. Coalition and Legal Aid staff have encountered several new arrivals who initially were denied erroneously but, with advocacy, many of those determinations were reversed. But of greater concern are those who are not assisted by advocates or who simply are not seeking extensions either because they are unaware of their rights or are discouraged from doing so given any fears, concerns, or frustrations this process has created.

## 2. Shelter Accessibility

Both *Butler v. City of New York* and *Lopez v. DHS* represent landmark moments for the rights of unhoused people living in New York City’s shelter system. Settled in 2017, *Butler* mandates DHS to comply with its obligations under federal, state, and local law to ensure that any person with a disability seeking shelter is properly accommodated.

In a similar vein, *Lopez*, settled in 2019, specifically addresses the rights and accommodation needs of transgender and gender non-conforming (“TGNC”), non-binary, and intersex people within the shelter system. As part of this agreement, DHS is required to create and maintain at least one shelter or shelter unit for TGNC clients in each borough except Staten Island; staff must undergo mandatory harassment and discrimination training; and both intake and complaint protocols were modified to protect the dignity and ensure the safety of TGNC clients.

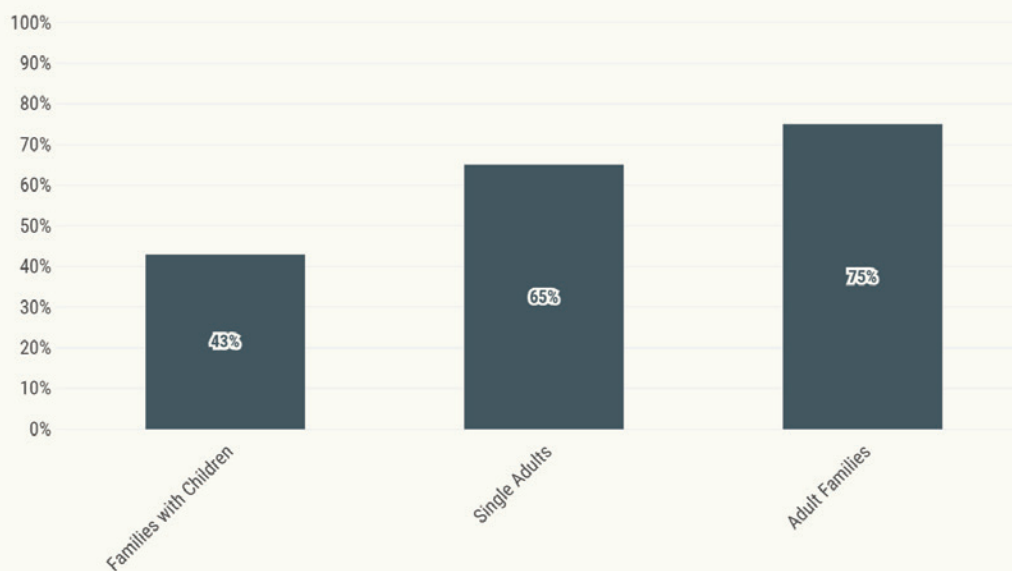
Even though these cases mandate changes in policy to address the unique challenges faced by marginalized people seeking shelter in New York City, the reality continues to fall short.

**Figure 1.7**

**Image Description:** A bar graph titled “Estimated Rates of Disability Among People Sleeping in DHS Shelters, November 2021.” The vertical axis lists percentages of 0% to 100% in increments of 10%. The horizontal axis lists 3 categories represented by dark blue bars: families with children has a value of 43%; single adults has a value of 65%; and adult families has a value of 75%.

**Figure 1.7**

**Estimated Rates of Disability Among People Sleeping in DHS Shelters, November 2021**



Source: Butler, et al., v. City of New York, Population Analysis (2022)

Note: Disabilities categories include blind/low vision, deaf/hard of hearing, mobility difficulties, conditions requiring air conditioning or medical appliances, and mental health conditions.



## Accessibility for People with Disabilities

In its most recent population analysis of shelter residents with disabilities, the City estimated that nearly two-thirds of single adults and three-quarters of adult families in shelters were living with a disability. Many individuals are unaware of their rights, subject to extensive delays or denial of the accommodations they have requested, or unable to navigate the bureaucratic processes necessary to secure that to which they are legally entitled.

*The physical layout and structure of shelter facilities can present significant barriers to people with disabilities.*

The physical layout and structure of shelter facilities can present significant barriers to people with disabilities. Many shelter buildings are old and lack ADA-compliant or even functionally accessible amenities required to ensure shelter residents with disabilities can equitably utilize facilities and services. This includes a lack of ADA-compliant bathrooms and other amenities, buildings with stairways and no available elevators, or emergency alarm systems that do not have features to alert clients with hearing disabilities. Coalition staff have encountered various instances where clients chose to sleep outside or were confined to their rooms because their assigned shelter facility could not accommodate their mobility device, or onsite elevators were inoperable for weeks with no alternative placements offered. Beyond physical accessibility, people with disabilities encounter numerous access barriers when navigating the shelter system, particularly people with multiple disabilities or nuanced access needs.

This unacceptable situation is further compounded by protocols that shuffle occupants between placements to address the City's need for additional capacity. In 2023, **over 700 people with disabilities were subjected to arduous, confusing reassessment of the reasonable accommodations granted to them during the COVID pandemic** – accommodations that promoted health and safety by placing residents in single and low-density rooms. Many Coalition clients were confronted with having to satisfy exacting evidentiary standards<sup>31</sup> in order to preserve their placements. This was further complicated by DHS failing to provide clear and timely written notices to impacted shelter residents about the process, the status of their individual determinations, and the sufficiency of medical records submitted to substantiate requests. As such, many individuals were transferred to congregate and other facilities that failed to address their access needs.

Similarly, new arrivals are seldom, if at all, provided information about their rights or the medical records necessary to establish their accommodation needs. Accordingly, many end up placed at one of the sprawling temporary congregate shelter sites, such as the tents at Floyd Bennett Field and Randall's Island, which have numerous access barriers for people with varying disabilities and medical needs.

In addition, the current 30-day and 60-day shelter limits complicate new arrivals' ability to engage in medical care and secure the assessments necessary to establish their disability. But even if a need is identified, all City agencies providing shelter for new arrivals are not using the same process – meaning that staff making the determinations have different levels of understanding of the relevant issues, new arrivals do not receive the same notices and appeal rights, and placement decisions greatly vary. On top of this, fewer accessible placements exist within the HERRCs and respite sites.

<sup>31</sup> [http://onlineresources.wnyc.net/nychra/docs/dhs\\_pb\\_2022-018\\_-\\_updated\\_guidance\\_on\\_single\\_rooms.pdf](http://onlineresources.wnyc.net/nychra/docs/dhs_pb_2022-018_-_updated_guidance_on_single_rooms.pdf)

Accessibility challenges for new arrivals and longer-term New Yorkers alike are not limited to physical access. **Coalition staff have continually asserted to the City that people with apparent psychiatric or cognitive needs are not being identified either during intake and assessment or by shelter staff at their placement.** Often these individuals are not self-reporting or explicitly requesting reasonable accommodations, resulting in placements that fail to address their needs. The congregate nature of most shelters for single adults, with their noise, lack of privacy, and forced adherence to rigid schedules, can be particularly challenging for people with mental health issues, psychiatric disabilities, trauma related to their long and difficult journeys to New York, cognitive or developmental disabilities, or those who require regular medical care – further marginalizing them within the very system intended to offer refuge.

In 2023, the New York City Council took a step towards addressing some of these shortcomings by passing legislation to create an Accessibility Advisory Board tasked with identifying and advising on accessibility issues in shelters. This bill also requires newly constructed affordable housing and shelters to be ADA-compliant. It is too early to assess the impact of the bill, however, and the board has not yet been created.

#### TGNC Clients' Struggle for Dignity & Safety in Shelter

Despite advances made under *Lopez*, TGNC people, whether new arrivals or longer-term New Yorkers, continue to experience difficulties accessing services that respect their identity. This is, in part, due to a shelter system that continues to utilize a binary framework, requiring individuals to choose a women's or men's facility without regard to the vast range of gender identities and expressions. As a result, transgender clients, especially those residing in shared living spaces, are frequently misgendered and subjected to discriminatory attitudes of staff and other clients that impinge on their sense of safety and ability to equitably access services and facilities.

*Transgender clients, especially those residing in shared living spaces, are frequently misgendered and subjected to discriminatory attitudes of staff and other clients that impinge on their sense of safety and ability to equitably access services and facilities.*

Too often, TGNC clients of the Coalition include both longer-term New Yorkers who have been harassed and have received multiple safety transfers within the shelter system, as well as TGNC new arrivals held in overcrowded waiting rooms or massive congregate facilities and who choose to sleep outside and, in some cases, contemplate suicide. Similarly, in the case of TGNC families, there are greater challenges to qualifying for shelter, particularly since documentation proving their status as a family may be more difficult to obtain, or a family member's preferred name may differ from their legal birth name.

### 3. Shelter Conditions

The conditions, configuration, and location of shelter facilities greatly impact the experiences of the individuals and families utilizing those facilities, and poor conditions and shelter configurations that feel unsafe exacerbate trauma, contribute to instability, and deter shelter usage by those in need.



## DHS System

Throughout the year, the Coalition for the Homeless monitors conditions in the DHS shelter system to assess compliance with existing legal requirements. Between such monitoring efforts and communication with residents, we witnessed an increase in conditions negatively impacting the health and safety of shelter residents. These ranged from lack of heat, air conditioning, and operable elevators, to residents being served inedible and expired food, to being confronted with mold, roaches, and vermin in their individual units.

Coalition staff routinely bring these issues to the attention of DHS to ensure they are addressed, but given that there are hundreds of shelter facilities throughout the five boroughs, it is incumbent upon the City and State to take the lead and adhere to their legal and moral obligation to provide safe, decent, and accessible shelter to all in need.

### “Crisis Shelters”

In its efforts to rapidly create enough shelter capacity for the large number of new arrivals entering New York, the City has been utilizing a wide range of facilities to serve as shelters, many of which are not *Callahan*-compliant. While the terms of the March 15, 2024, *Callahan* settlement provide for five types of facilities that the City may utilize as “crisis shelters” for new arrivals (facilities that don’t meet *Callahan* standards but are still safe, and compliant with Federal law and local fire and safety codes), the conditions, configurations, and location of many of these are far from ideal and can negatively impact individuals’ efforts toward stability. Examples include:

- Placing families with children in “semi-congregate” settings in large tents erected in the remote Floyd Bennett Field;
- Placing single adults in a stark, unused mail warehouse remotely located at JFK airport;
- Placing people in congregate settings in which large numbers of cots are placed end-to-end;
- Placing single adult men in a former prison facility;<sup>32</sup> and
- Concentrating more than 3,000 new arrivals in the Hall Street facilities in Brooklyn<sup>33</sup>



**(Left) Image Description:** A makeshift shelter at a school gymnasium, depicting a group of single men, each with thin blankets on the floors, and surrounded by sparse amounts of belongings. There are approximately 21 men each somewhat tightly packed together. The foreground of the image is of a blanket around 3 feet x 7 feet with another blanket covering personal belongings and shoes.

**(Right) Image Description:** A converted hotel ballroom lined with rows and rows of cots. There are 11 rows, each with 11 cots in each, with the head of one cot, touching the foot of another. The image is taken from an elevated balcony and the room is ornate with chandeliers and hand-crafted details with carved decor.

<sup>32</sup> The former prison facility is currently no longer in use as a shelter.

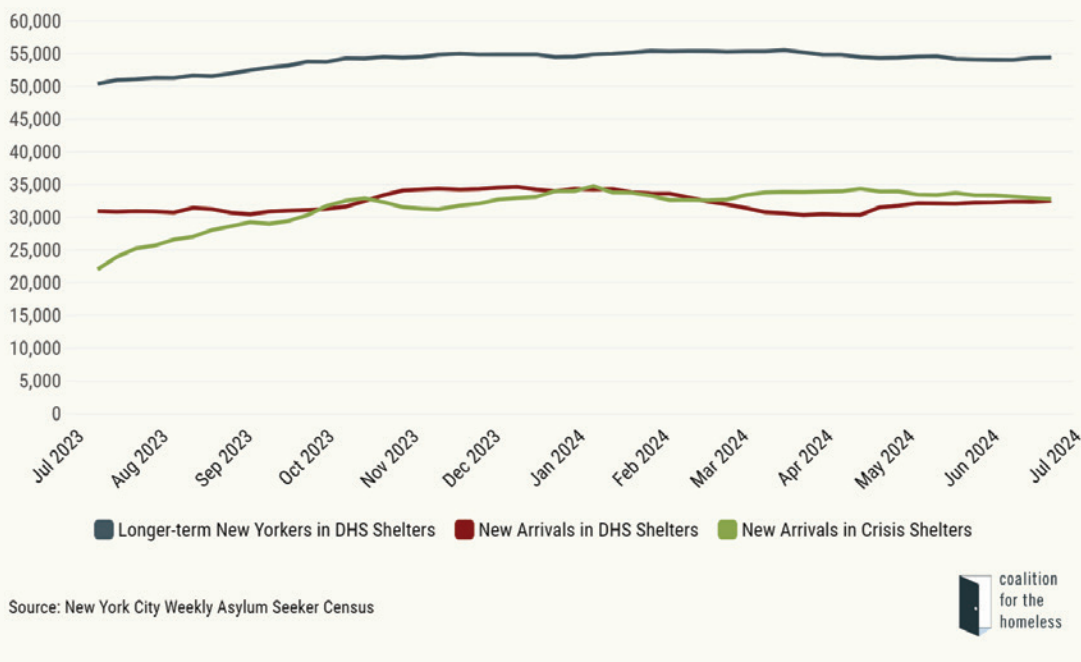
<sup>33</sup> The maximum number of beds the City is currently permitted to have in a DHS shelter is 200, although some facilities with far more, such as 30th Street Intake and Assessment Shelter and the Bed-Atlantic armory, were grandfathered in.

Photos by Coalition for the Homeless

Figure 1.8

**Image Description:** A line graph labeled “Number of New Arrivals and Longer-Term New Yorkers in DHS and Crisis Shelters Each Night, Fiscal Year 2024.” The vertical axis lists numbers of individuals from 0 to 60,000 in increments of 5,000. The horizontal axis shows a range of dates from July 2023 to July 2024 in one-month increments. Three lines mark the number of people in DHS and crisis shelters each night broken out by population: a dark blue line on top shows the number of longer-term New Yorkers in DHS shelters, a red line that was in between the other two lines in July 2023 shows the number of New Arrivals in DHS shelters, and a green line that was the lowest on July 2023 shows the number of New Arrivals in crisis shelters. As of July 2024, there were 54,418 longer-term New Yorkers in DHS shelters, 32,792 New Arrivals in crisis shelters, and 32,540 New arrivals in DHS shelters.

**Figure 1.8**  
 Number of New Arrivals and Longer-Term New Yorkers in DHS and Crisis Shelters Each Night, Fiscal Year 2024



## E. DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE SHELTER POPULATION

In addition to significant growth in the unhoused population generally, the demographics of those sleeping in the shelter systems reflect stark racial and ethnic disparities that underscore the broader societal and systemic challenges facing many parts of the country. More specifically, Black and Hispanic populations are again significantly overrepresented in the city’s shelters.

In FY23, Black (non-Hispanic) people constituted 44 percent of the shelter population compared to 23 percent of the citywide population generally. Similarly, Hispanic people constituted 46 percent of shelter residents compared to 29 percent citywide.

Examining the numbers more closely, it is particularly notable that between FY22 and FY23, there was a substantial rise in the number of Hispanic residents in shelters, from 10,230 to 19,560. This near doubling over the course of one year resulted in Hispanics eclipsing Black (non-Hispanic) people as the largest racial demographic in city shelters. Concurrently, the Black (non-Hispanic) shelter population saw a lesser increase, from 17,710 to 18,400 residents.

The rapid demographic changes have been driven primarily by the new arrivals who, in 2022 and 2023, were largely families with children from Latin America – particularly Venezuela, Ecuador, and Colombia.

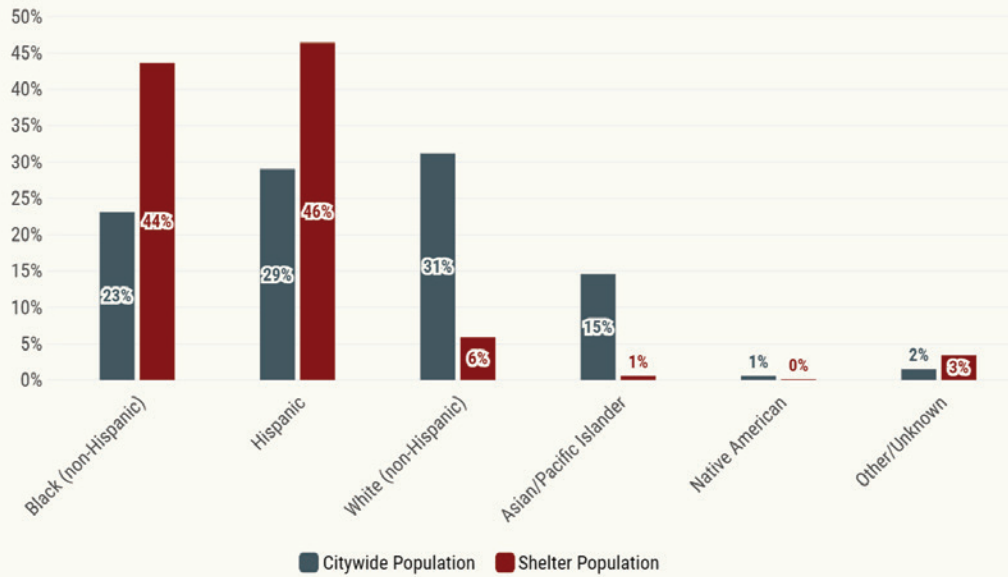
A significant number of new arrivals are also from Mauritania, Senegal, and other African nations. Since New York City lacks an extensive pre-existing community of people from many of those countries, those individuals have fewer existing support networks to help them resettle – and those speaking Wolof, Pulaar, or other African dialects have encountered cultural challenges and language barriers, further complicating their resettlement and access to services.

Regardless of their country of origin, the new arrivals require legal support to navigate the complexities of the federal immigration system and to secure work authorizations in order to be legally employed. Such restrictions on the ability to earn income hinder the new arrivals' efforts to find the stability needed to rebuild their lives, prolonging their need for emergency shelter.

**Figure 1.9**

**Image Description:** A double bar chart labeled “Race and Ethnicity of People Sleeping in DHS Shelters vs. Citywide, Fiscal Year 2023.” The vertical axis lists percentages of 0% to 50% in increments of 5%. The horizontal axis lists six categories of race and ethnicity: Black (non-Hispanic), Hispanic, White (non-Hispanic), Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American, and Other/Unknown. Each of these categories has two bars: a dark blue bar to the left represents the share of the citywide population while a red bar to the right represents the share of the DHS shelter population belonging to a labeled race and ethnicity. The citywide population is 23% Black (non-Hispanic), 29% Hispanic, 31% White (non-Hispanic), 15% Asian/Pacific Islander, 1% Native American, and 2% Other/Unknown. By comparison, the DHS shelter population is 44% Black (non-Hispanic), 46% Hispanic, 6% White (non-Hispanic), 1% Asian/Pacific Islander, less than 1% Native American, and 3% Other/Unknown.

**Figure 1.9**  
Race and Ethnicity of People Sleeping in DHS Shelters vs. Citywide, Fiscal Year 2023



Source: New York City Department of Homeless Services Data Dashboard, U.S. Census Bureau, Race and Ethnicity in New York City, New York (ACS 1-Year Supplemental Estimates)





# HELPING HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS ACCESS PERMANENT HOUSING

**Image description:** An adult stands in between their two children. Their arm is around one, and standing in front of another, they wear a pink winter jacket and scarf. The children smile at the camera and embrace their mother. The background is of a paved sidewalk with green hoarding board.

# HELPING HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS ACCESS PERMANENT HOUSING

It is the city’s duty not only to provide unhoused individuals and families with shelter that is safe, suitable, and accessible, but also to ensure such shelter stays are as brief as possible and are coupled with a way to access permanent housing and stability. Shelters are not the answer to homelessness; housing is.

However, the average length-of-stay (“LOS”) for families with children, adult families, and single adults in shelters generally has been increasing for years, with the average duration for each of these groups peaking in FY22.

The average LOS decreased in FY23, but that decrease cannot be read as an indication that the Mayor and Governor are succeeding in addressing the underlying reason that people seek and stay in shelters: the lack of access to affordable housing. Instead, the decrease in LOS was a result of the large number of new arrivals entering the shelter system, who had shorter stays in DHS shelters largely for the structural and policy reasons discussed above.<sup>34</sup>

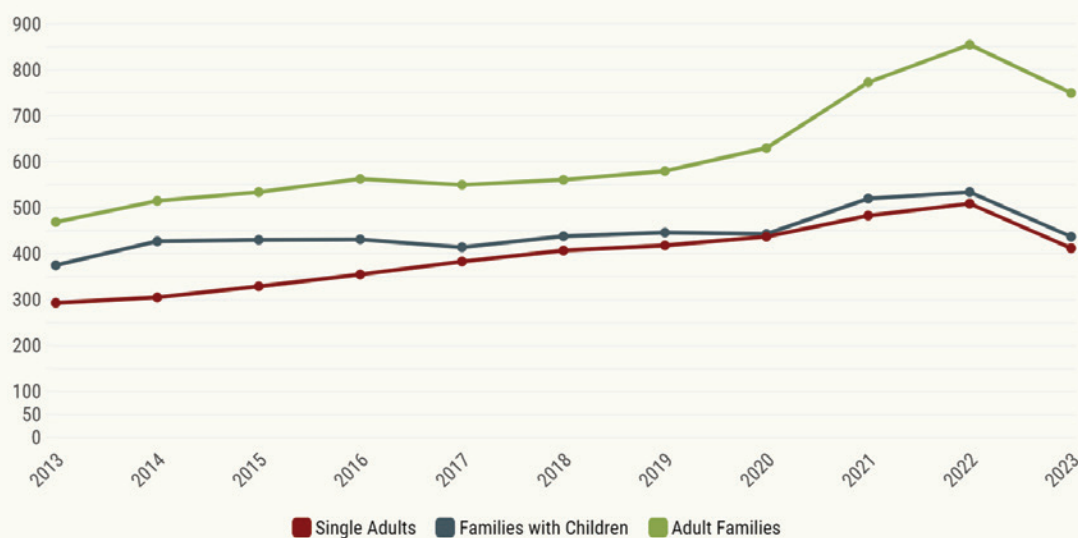
To shorten the time that families and individuals languish in shelters, the Mayor and Governor must address both the lack of access to existing housing, and the deficient supply of housing that is available to homeless and extremely low-income (“ELI”) households.

**Figure 2.1**

**Image Description:** A line graph titled “Average Number of Days Spent in DHS Shelters by Population, Fiscal Years 2013 to 2023.” The vertical axis lists numbers from 0 to 900 in increments of 50. The horizontal axis lists fiscal years 2013 to 2023. Three lines represent the average number of days spent in shelter by various populations: a red line at the bottom represents single adults, with a value of 412 in 2023; a dark blue line in the center represents families with children, with a value of 437 in 2023; and a green line at the top represents adult families, with a value of 750 in 2023.

**Figure 2.1**

**Average Number of Days Spent in DHS Shelters by Population, Fiscal Years 2013 to 2023**



Sources: New York City Mayor’s Office of Operations, Mayor’s Management Report 2023: Department of Homeless Services



<sup>34</sup> Preliminary Mayor’s Management Report, January 2024 (“PMMR”). The City does not track outcomes of new arrivals who exit the shelter system. Given that there is still no functioning resettlement program for new arrivals and that new arrivals have limited access to public benefits and employment opportunities due to their immigration status, it is likely that few new arrivals are transitioning from shelters into permanent housing. [http://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2024/2024\\_pmmr.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2024/2024_pmmr.pdf)

## A. INCREASING ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING

### 1. Access to and Use of Rent Vouchers

One of the most effective tools the City and State have at their disposal for helping individuals and families exit shelter – and avoid entering shelters in the first place – is rent vouchers such as CityFHEPS and the State’s FHEPS program (Family Homelessness & Eviction Prevention Supplement).

The City-funded rent voucher programs introduced by the previous mayoral administration (the design of which continues to evolve) have proven to be a very effective tool for helping homeless households move from the shelter system into permanent housing and stability.

As figure 2.2 shows, the number of households exiting shelters with City-funded vouchers increased to its highest level since FY15, which is an improvement by the City that must be acknowledged. The Mayor also deserves credit for issuing an emergency decree in September 2023 that allowed CityFHEPS vouchers to be used outside of the five boroughs of NYC, thus opening up the universe of available units in New York State.

However, when measured against the actual number of homeless households in DHS shelters, it becomes evident that much more must be done to help individuals and families utilize these vouchers – especially given that **by the end of 2023 more than 10,000 households in the shelter system had qualified for CityFHEPS vouchers but were unable to use them.**<sup>35</sup>

Having recognized the effectiveness of CityFHEPS vouchers, as well as the obstacles to securing and using them, the City Council attempted to expand and improve the CityFHEPS program by passing Local Laws 99,<sup>36</sup> 100,<sup>37</sup> 101,<sup>38</sup> and 102<sup>39</sup> in June 2023. Together these bills remove eligibility rules that require the recipient to have recently resided in shelter or have a certain employment status or source of income. They also provide that, except in certain circumstances, recipients receive the full rental allowance amount without deduction for utility allowances. Coupled with an expansion of the income eligibility cutoff to 50 percent of the area median income (“AMI”), these measures expand eligibility to those who are “at risk of eviction or experiencing homelessness.”

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<sup>35</sup> <https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/959-23/mayor-adams-progress-connecting-new-yorkers-shelter-permanent-housing-technology#/0>

<sup>36</sup> <https://intro.nyc.local-laws/2023-99>

<sup>37</sup> <https://nyc.legistar1.com/nyc/attachments/6d9baa48-7f2c-4b99-9627-96a471f1d267.pdf>

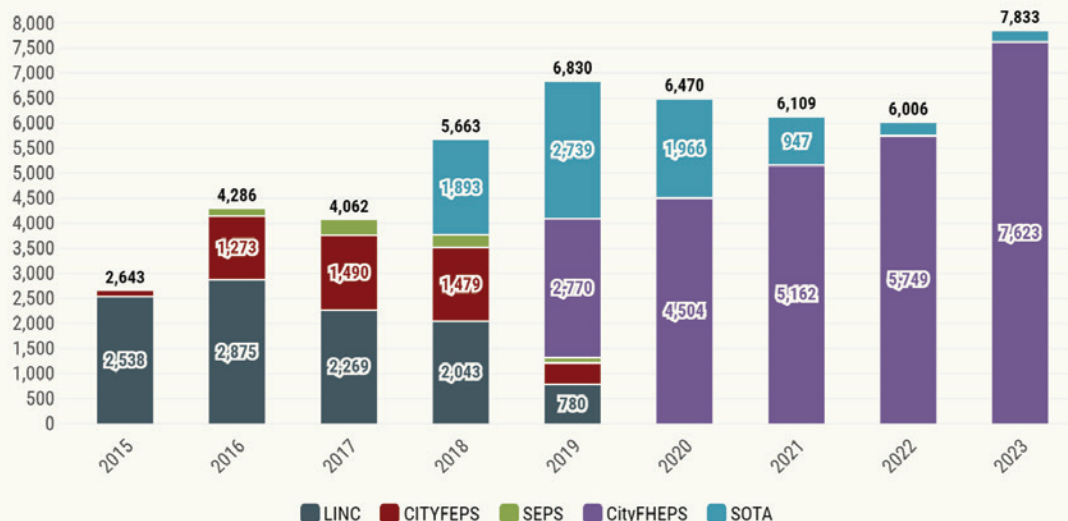
<sup>38</sup> <https://nyc.legistar1.com/nyc/attachments/ad8eb19b-be4d-43d7-bcc7-a6ca17e03899.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> <https://intro.nyc.local-laws/2023-102>

Figure 2.2

**Image Description:** A stacked bar chart labeled “Households Exiting NYC DHS Shelters with City-Initiated Vouchers, Fiscal Years 2015 to 2023.” The vertical axis shows numbers from 0 to 8,000 in increments of 500. The horizontal axis lists fiscal years 2015 to 2023. A bar represents each year in multiple sections showing the types of vouchers and corresponding shelter exit numbers: A light blue section shows “SOTA,” with a value of 210 for fiscal year 2023, a purple section shows “CityFHEPS,” with a value of 7,623 for fiscal year 2023, and there are three remaining categories that were present in earlier years but not in 2023: a green section for “SEPS,” a red section for “CITYFEPS,” and a dark blue section for “LINC.” The top of each bar is labeled with the total number of exits, including a value of 7,833 for fiscal year 2023.

**Figure 2.2**  
Households Exiting NYC DHS Shelters with City-Initiated Vouchers, Fiscal Years 2015 to 2023



Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services

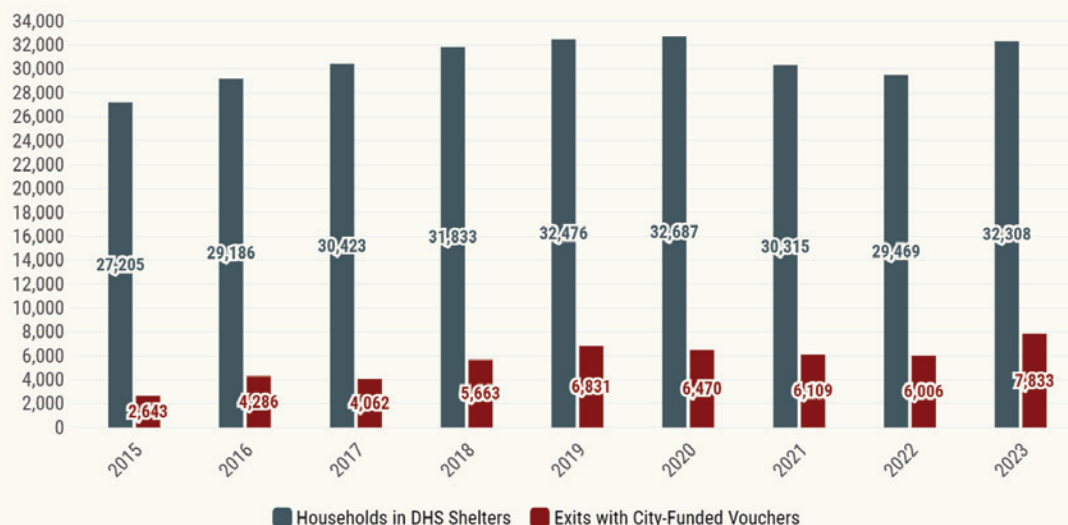
Note: Includes vouchers used for shelter exits only, not prevention. Annual figures are calculated based on the percentage of vouchers used for shelter exits across all years.



Figure 2.3

**Image Description:** A double bar chart labeled “Households in DHS Shelters vs. Households Exiting Shelter with City-Funded Vouchers, Fiscal Years 2015 to 2023.” The vertical axis shows numbers from 0 to 34,000 in increments of 2,000. The horizontal axis lists fiscal years 2015 to 2023. Each fiscal year has two bars: a dark blue bar to the left represents the total number of households living in DHS shelters, while a red bar to the right represents the number of exits from DHS shelters that were accomplished with a city-funded voucher. The chart shows the number of exits with city-funded vouchers to be consistently and significantly smaller than the total number of households in DHS shelters across all years. In 2023, the chart shows 32,308 households in DHS shelters, versus 7,833 households exiting DHS shelters with city-funded vouchers.

**Figure 2.3**  
Households in DHS Shelters vs. Households Exiting Shelter with City-Funded Vouchers, Fiscal Years 2015 to 2023



Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services



While Mayor Adams eliminated the rule that required households to reside in a municipal shelter for at least 90 days before being eligible for a CityFHEPS voucher, he has refused to implement the City Council’s full expansion of the voucher program – first by vetoing the bills and then by refusing to implement critical elements of the package once his veto was overridden by the City Council.

In order to reduce the number of households residing each night in shelters, it is imperative that Mayor Adams address obstacles that hinder access to, and use of, CityFHEPS vouchers by:

- Supporting the full implementation of the recent reforms to CityFHEPS, and expanding CityFHEPS to more New Yorkers than those served by the current narrow definition;
- Correcting understaffing of City offices charged with processing subsidies that enable households to move from shelter to permanent housing; and
- Rebuilding the NYC Commission on Human Rights’ Income Discrimination Unit to hold landlords, real estate agents, and brokerage agents accountable for unlawfully denying placements to housing voucher holders.

This latter item is critical because, for yet another year, source-of-income (“SOI”) discrimination continues to be the highest reported form of illegal housing discrimination in the city, significantly limiting the impact of CityFHEPS and further widening housing inequalities and deepening existing racial segregation.<sup>40</sup> Common methods used by brokers to discriminate against voucher holders include the use of explicit denials, not responding after a voucher is mentioned, or pretending the unit is no longer available. In addition, many brokers try using income requirements (e.g., earning 40 times the rent), having a minimum credit score, or requiring a guarantor to exclude tenants whose vouchers could cover 100 percent of the rent. Unfortunately, the New York City Commission on Human Rights has remained too chronically underfunded to enforce the law.

Given that so many households require rent vouchers in the first place because the public assistance rent allowance is set by the State at a level that is so far below actual rents in New York,<sup>41</sup> it is Governor Hochul who must address this critical flaw. The State’s FHEPS program, designed to bridge that gap, could and should play a much larger role in reducing the number of people in shelters, but its narrow entitlement eligibility requirement excludes all single adults and adult families as well as most families with minor children (who either have not been sued in eviction proceedings in Housing Court, or have not been evicted in a Housing Court proceeding and subsequently entered DHS shelter within 12 months of applying).

**Again, it is the State that sets the public assistance rent allowance at a level that is a fraction of actual fair market rents, and it should thus be the State’s responsibility to correct that problem** – one that impacts tens of thousands of homeless and at-risk New Yorkers. Broadening eligibility for the State’s FHEPS voucher, or more to the point, increasing the public assistance rent allowance to fair market rent (“FMR”) levels, would significantly reduce the need for emergency shelters in New York.

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40 Unlock NYC, Serial Discriminators List (2023), <https://public-unlock.nyc3.cdn.digitaloceanspaces.com/pdfs/SerialDiscrimination-Report-2023.pdf>

41 The public assistance rent allowance is \$215/month for a single adult and \$400/month for a family of three with minor children. The comparable HUD FMR levels used by NYCHA in 2024 for basic Section 8 vouchers are \$2,696 for a one-bedroom apartment and \$3,027 for a two-bedroom apartment.



## 2. Access to Supportive Housing

Given the significant number of individuals with mental illnesses or disabilities who sleep either unsheltered or in congregate shelters, supportive housing remains an essential tool in the efforts to reduce homelessness in New York City. Supportive housing offers a stable living environment coupled with services that support eligible individuals, and not only results in long-term stability for formerly homeless residents, but also saves taxpayers approximately \$10,000 per year for every person housed. Furthermore, property values in neighborhoods where supportive housing is constructed generally increase. If operated properly, it is thus a win-win-win solution.

While FY23 shows a greater number of single adults placed into supportive housing than in the previous two years, it must be noted that placements in both FY21 and FY22 were suppressed by the COVID-19 pandemic. **Last year's number, while higher than the number of placements during the pandemic, was still lower than the number placed in FY19, and far below the high of 2,174 placed in FY14.**

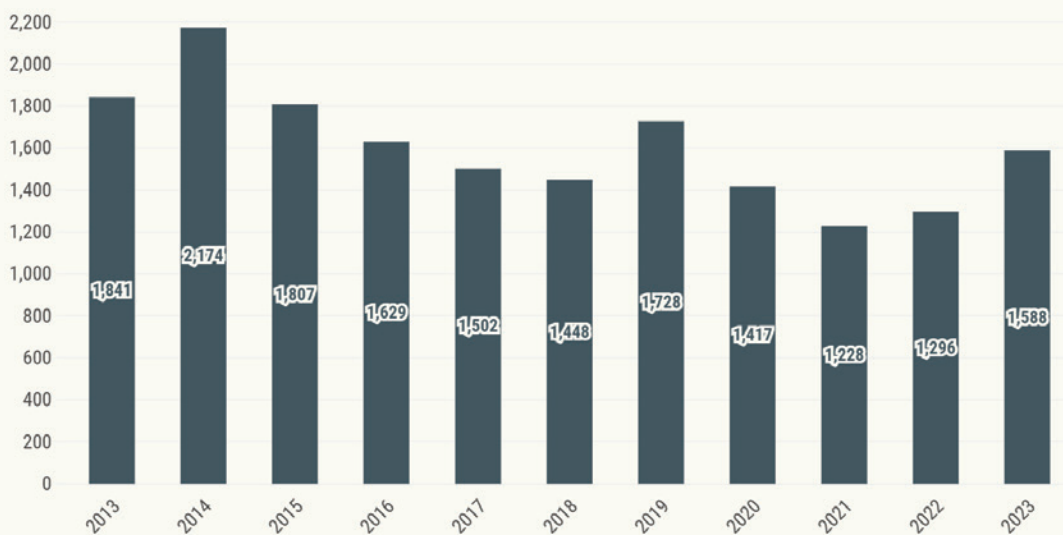
Despite the urgency driven by rising homelessness, the City has failed to streamline a convoluted system that impedes access to supportive housing for too many. People with psychiatric disabilities must go through lengthy and complex application processes laden with unnecessary documentation that result in the continued disenfranchisement of those whom supportive housing providers aim to serve. The requirement for excessive medical verification, for instance, often redundantly necessitates a doctor's certification even when the applicant's primary care provider may be a social worker or nurse practitioner. This not only slows down the process, but also potentially disqualifies applicants who cannot meet these unnecessary demands.

**Figure 2.4**

**Image Description:** A bar graph labeled "Annual Supportive Housing Placements for Homeless Single Adults, Fiscal Years 2013 to 2023." The vertical axis shows numbers from 0 to 2,200 in increments of 200. The horizontal axis lists fiscal years 2013 through 2023. Each fiscal year has a dark blue bar that shows the number of single adult supportive housing placements, with a value of 1,588 for fiscal year 2023.

**Figure 2.4**

### Annual Supportive Housing Placements for Homeless Single Adults, Fiscal Years 2013 to 2023



Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services



Additionally, existing program challenges are frequently exacerbated by administrative bottlenecks and chronic underfunding, which hamper effective operation and service delivery within supportive housing frameworks. Persistent barriers, such as referral processes that do not account for the physical accessibility needs or the specific eligibility criteria of individuals, inaccessible interview locations, and mismatched eligibility assessments serve to exacerbate the gap between the availability of supportive placements and the swelling demand. The processes lack transparency and do not empower individuals involved to participate actively in decisions about their living arrangements. Moreover, staffing shortages and high turnover rates in shelters intensify these challenges, making it difficult for residents to find knowledgeable staff willing to navigate the cumbersome and opaque housing application process.

- There were approximately 37,000 total supportive housing units in NYC in FY23. **Yet, of the 8,235 individuals and families who applied for supportive housing and were deemed eligible that year, only 1,787 – or 21 percent – were accepted.**<sup>42</sup>
- Similarly, while 74 DHS and DHS-contracted shelters had more than five individuals eligible for supporting housing in FY23, only 34 such shelters – **fewer than half** – had more than five individuals actually accepted into supportive housing.
- And, as evidenced by data made available under Local Law 3 of 2022,<sup>43</sup> **115 DHS and DHS-contracted shelters that had zero applications approved or a number so low that it could not be reported** for concern of identifying a specific individual – a greater number of shelters than those that had more than five individuals or families accepted for supportive housing.
- Of those who are finally accepted for supportive housing, many wait months and months before moving, unable to navigate the bureaucratic barriers to move in without the support of experienced staff who must facilitate the process. In fact, at the time of the City’s most recent report on CAPS in **June 2023, there were 2,753 individuals and families who had been approved for placement but had still not received supportive housing.**
- Despite the low acceptance rate that turns away so many who desperately need these homes, **2,000 supportive housing units still lay vacant in April 2024** due to bureaucratic oversight amongst the jumble of government agencies providing supportive housing.<sup>44</sup>

The ongoing bureaucratic inefficiencies and the lack of corrective action to streamline and humanize the supportive housing application process continue to undermine the effectiveness of this crucial resource. As a result, far too many individuals with mental illnesses or disabilities who are eligible for supportive housing remain homeless.

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42 See NYC HRA CAS Local Law 3 Reporting on Coordinated Assessment and Placement System (“CAPS”) Fiscal Year Ending 6/30/2023, available at <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/hra/downloads/pdf/news/HRA-Local-Law-3-CFY2022-08312023.pdf>

43 <https://intro.nyc.gov/local-laws/2022-3>

44 <https://gothamist.com/news/nyc-has-2k-empty-apartments-for-at-risk-people-a-new-bill-would-use-data-to-fill-those-slots>

### 3. Placements into Set-Asides

Unhoused individuals and families who do not require or are ineligible for supportive housing have few options other than set-asides – permanent housing units specifically designated for homeless households.

Figure 2.5 shows that 362 more households were placed into set-asides in FY23 as compared to the previous year. While any increase of housing placements is welcome, **the number of longer-term New Yorkers in shelters increased by 4,790 people**. Not only is the number of placements into set-aside units far too low to begin with, even the increase is not keeping up with the growth in homelessness in NYC. This again illustrates that the known solutions to homelessness are not being implemented at a rate or scale sufficient to reverse the crisis.

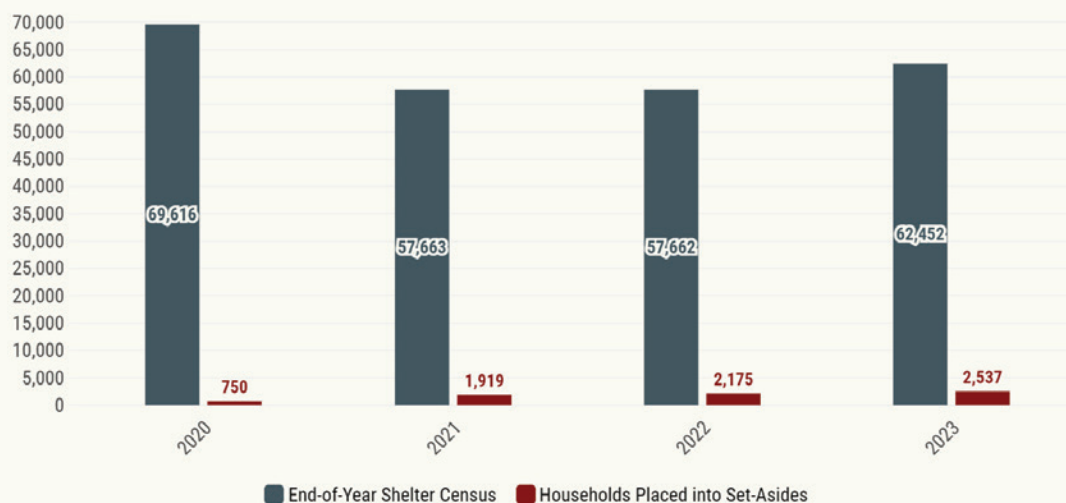
**Figure 2.5**

**Image Description:** A double bar graph labeled “Homeless Households Moved into Set-Aside Housing Units vs. Individuals Sleeping in NYC Shelters, Fiscal Years 2020 to 2023.” The vertical axis shows numbers from 0 to 70,000 in increments of 5,000. The horizontal axis lists fiscal years 2020 through 2023. Each year has two bars: dark blue bar to the left shows the number of people sleeping in NYC shelters based on an end-of-year census, and the red bar to the right shows the number of homeless households moved into set-aside housing units. This data does not include New Arrivals. Labels on top of each bar show the total applicable number for each year, with the values of 2,537 homeless households moved into set-aside housing units and an end-of-year census count of 62,452 people sleeping in DHS shelters in fiscal year 2023.

**Figure 2.5**

#### Homeless Households Moved into Set-Aside Housing Units vs. Individuals Sleeping in NYC Shelters, Fiscal Years 2020 to 2023

Data does not include New Arrivals.



Source: New York City Mayor’s Office of Operations, Mayor’s Management Report 2023: Department of Housing Preservation and Development, NYC Department of Homeless Services



*Because the City’s published figure for number of unduplicated households in DHS shelters over the course of the fiscal year includes both new arrivals and longer-term New Yorkers, in order to exclude new arrivals from the analysis, the chart above compares households placed into set-asides with individuals in NYC shelters – a data set from which we are able to disaggregate new arrivals.*

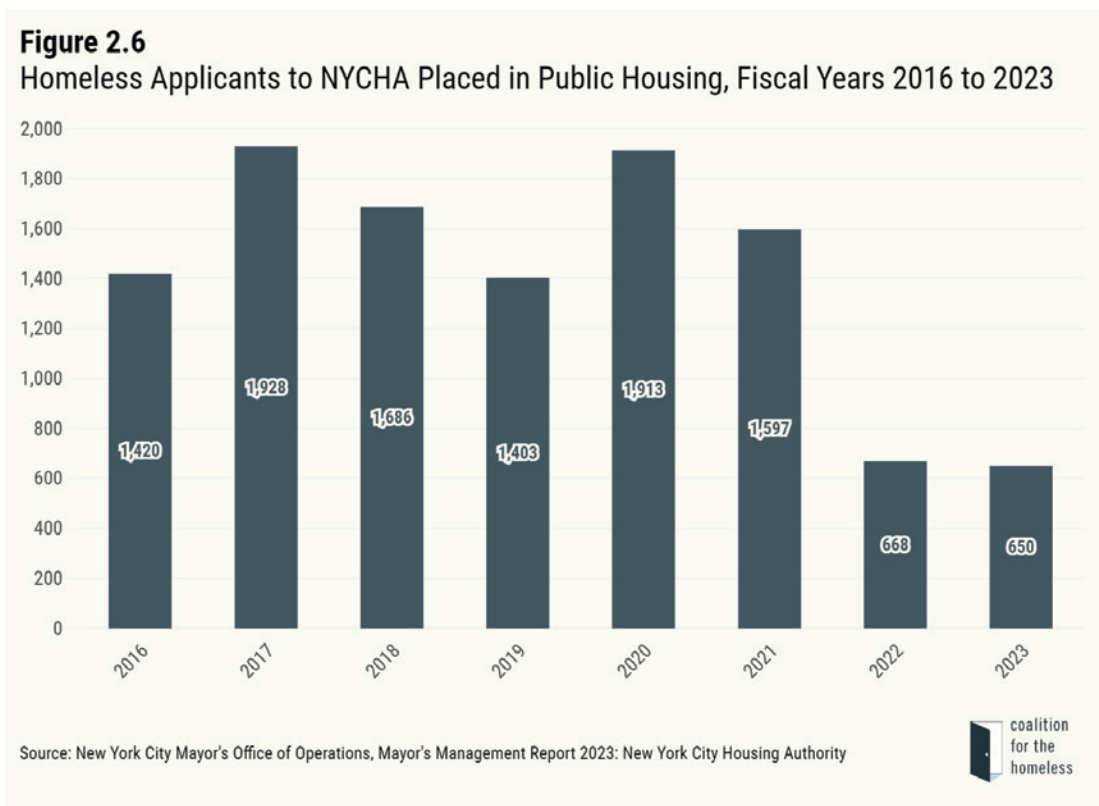
#### 4. Placements into Public Housing

As the city’s largest source of permanent affordable housing, public housing administered by the New York City Housing Authority (“NYCHA”) has long been an important source of housing for formerly homeless households. However, as figure 2.6 illustrates, the City has been failing to utilize this critical resource, and, in fact, the number of individuals who moved from shelters into NYCHA housing was at its lowest level over the last eight years.

NYCHA attributes this to significant increases in the amount of time required to complete unit turnovers, which surged from 160.8 days in FY22 to 370 days in FY23.<sup>45</sup> As a result of such delays, approximately 4,000 – 5,000 housing units sat vacant every month throughout 2023.<sup>46</sup> While no one should be subjected to unsafe or unsanitary housing conditions, it is equally unacceptable for the City to fail to take the necessary steps to expedite these repairs so that thousands of eligible homeless households can finally move from shelter into permanent housing.

**Figure 2.6**

**Image Description:** A bar graph labeled “Homeless Applicants to NYCHA Placed in Public Housing, Fiscal Years 2016 to 2023.” The vertical axis shows numbers from 0 to 2,000 in increments of 200. The horizontal axis lists fiscal years 2016 through 2023. Each fiscal year has a dark blue bar that shows the number of homeless applicants to NYCHA who have been placed in public housing per fiscal year, with a value of 650 for fiscal year 2023.



45 See Mayor’s Management Report, Sept. 2023, p. 382. Unfortunately, these delays are growing longer as the most recent PMMR reports that during the first four months of FY24 unit turnovers were taking an average of 408.8 days to complete, up significantly from the 298.8 days for the same period of FY23.

46 See NYCHA Metrics-Public Housing Charts-Vacancies available at <https://eapps.nycha.info/NyCHAmetrics/Charts/PublicHousingChartsTabs/>; see also, <https://www.thecity.nyc/2024/02/21/nycha-5000-empty-apartments/>

## 5. Resettlement of New Arrivals

Given that over the past two years more than 200,000 new arrivals have come to New York in need of shelter, services, and housing, it is deeply concerning that Governor Hochul failed – and continues to fail – to design, fund, and implement a comprehensive statewide decompression and resettlement plan. Refugee resettlement is traditionally a role of the State (with Federal backing), and yet two years into the crisis, the Governor has done little more than launch the sputtering MRAP, which State officials themselves concede is a “disappointment.”<sup>47</sup> The goal of the program was to resettle between 1,250 and 2,500 migrant families into permanent housing throughout New York State in the first year, but MRAP had not even reached 400 by May 2024.

Despite pleas from providers and advocates to correct obvious flaws in the design of the program – such as the existing one-year cap on rent support, and currently operating the program in only five of the state’s 62 counties – Governor Hochul has shown no interest in fixing MRAP and helping new arrivals secure permanent housing and move toward stability. As of May 2024, 14,559 families with minor children – consisting of 50,883 individuals – remained in NYC shelters.

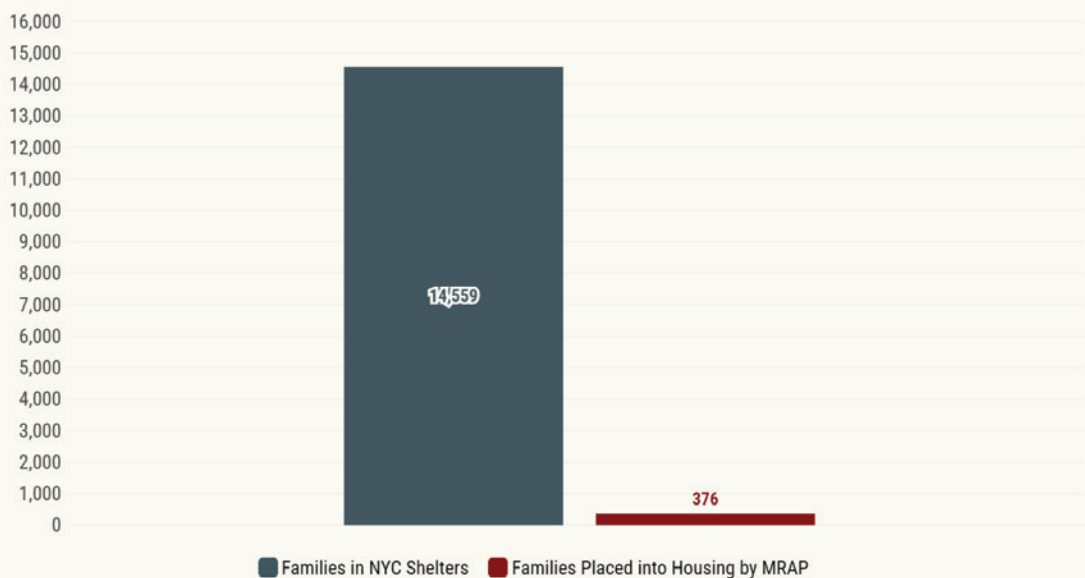
Given that even if the cost of MRAP were doubled, it would cost a fraction of what it is costing the State and City to shelter families with minor children in inappropriate facilities like the massive “semi-congregate” tents in Floyd Bennett Field, the Governor’s reticence to seriously engage in resettlement efforts<sup>48</sup> is difficult to comprehend. These are families who came to New York to start new lives, find work, and become members of the community – not to live in shelters.

**Figure 2.7**

**Image Description:** A double bar graph labeled “New Arrival Families in Shelters vs. Housed by MRAP, May 2024.” The vertical axis shows numbers from 0 to 16,000 in increments of 1,000. The graph depicts two bars next to each other: to the left is a dark blue bar displaying the number of New Arrival families in NYC shelters with a value of 14,559 and to the right is a significantly smaller red bar displaying the number of New Arrival families that have been placed into housing by the MRAP program with a value of 376.

**Figure 2.7**

### New Arrival Families in Shelters vs. Housed by MRAP, May 2024



Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services



<sup>47</sup> <https://www.newsnationnow.com/us-news/immigration/migrants-pay-rent-assistance/>

<sup>48</sup> Kate Lisa, DOL: Nearly 40k jobs identified for NY migrants, Spectrum Local News (Dec. 18, 2023), <https://spectrumlocalnews.com/nys/central-ny/politics/2023/12/19/dol--nearly-40k-jobs-identified-for-ny-migrants>

## B. INCREASING SUPPLY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

While vouchers and other forms of rent support are extremely effective tools in fighting mass homelessness, we cannot “voucher” the city and state all the way out of a crisis that, at its core, derives from the severe lack of affordable housing for those at the lowest income levels.

**For every 100 ELI households in the New York metro area, there are merely 32 affordable and available rental units.**<sup>49</sup> In a city where the cost of living far exceeds national averages, and ELI households are defined as those earning below the poverty line or 30 percent of the AMI, this gap leaves a vast number of residents without access to housing. This situation has 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 worsening housing precarity in New York City is further compounded by the growing rent burdens borne by the city’s residents. Rent-burdened households (i.e., spending more than 30 percent of household income on rent) increased from 53 percent in 2021 to an alarming 86 percent in 2023. Meanwhile, the number of ELI households who were severely rent-burdened (i.e., spending more than 50 percent of household income on rent) increased to 74 percent.<sup>50</sup> This financial strain severely limits the capacity of ELI households to afford other necessities, such as food, healthcare, and childcare, and forces many households to live in overcrowded conditions (i.e., 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 New York City households with at least one child are overcrowded. 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 unabated.

The median rent in New York City 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,<sup>51</sup> 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. More to the point, the vacancy rate for truly affordable apartments (i.e., those renting for less than \$1,100 per month) was only 0.4 percent. **Effectively, there are no affordable apartments left in New York for those who need them most.**

In fact, this dynamic has continued trending in the wrong direction. **Between 2017 and 2021 alone, New York City lost 96,000 housing units with rents under \$1,500**, while gaining 107,000 units with rents of \$2,300 or more.<sup>52</sup> 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.

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49 National Low Income Housing Coalition, *The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes* (2024), [https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/gap/2024/Gap-Report\\_2024.pdf](https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/gap/2024/Gap-Report_2024.pdf)

50 See N.Y.C. DEP’T OF HOUSING PRESERVATION & DEVELOPMENT, *2023 New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey Selected Initial Findings* (2024), [https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/gap/2024/Gap-Report\\_2024.pdf](https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/gap/2024/Gap-Report_2024.pdf); see also 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>

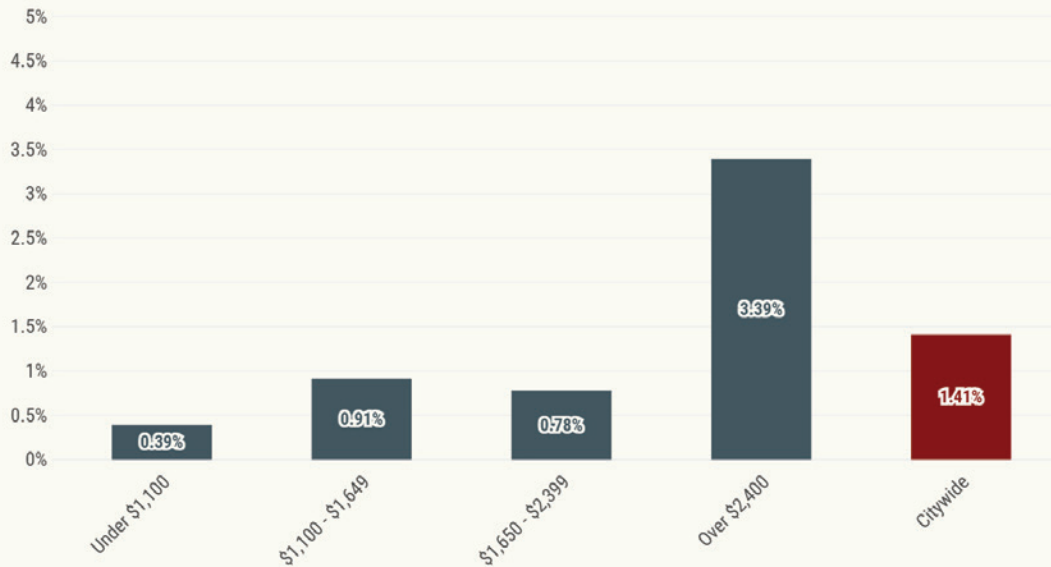
51 <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdfs/about/2023-nychvs-selected-initial-findings.pdf>

52 Taysha Milagros Clark, *Housing Affordability: The Dire Housing Crisis for Extremely Low-Income New Yorkers*, (June 2022), [https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Housing-Affordability-Brief\\_June-2022.pdf](https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Housing-Affordability-Brief_June-2022.pdf)

**Figure 2.8**

**Image Description:** A bar graph labeled “Net Rental Vacancy Rate by Asking Rent, Calendar Year 2023.” The vertical axis shows percentages from 0% to 5% in increments of 0.5%. The horizontal axis shows rent amount ranges of Under \$1,100, \$1,100 - \$1,649, \$1,650 - \$2,399, Over \$2,400, and Citywide. Each rent amount range includes a dark blue bar labeled with a corresponding net rental vacancy rate, ranging from 0.39% for Under \$1,100 to 3.39% for Over \$2,400. The bar for Citywide is red, and it displays a net rental vacancy rate of 1.41%.

**Figure 2.8**  
**Net Rental Vacancy Rate by Asking Rent, Calendar Year 2023**



Source: NYC Department of Housing Preservation & Development, 2023 New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey Selected Initial Findings



## 1. Expanding the Supply of Supportive Housing

Figure 2.9 below shows the number of supportive housing units completed in FY23.

Although the recent uptick in supportive housing units completed is promising, it is still nowhere close to keeping pace with actual demand. More specifically, only 1,197 units were completed in FY23, but the number of people eligible for supportive housing in FY23 was 8,235 – nearly seven times that number.

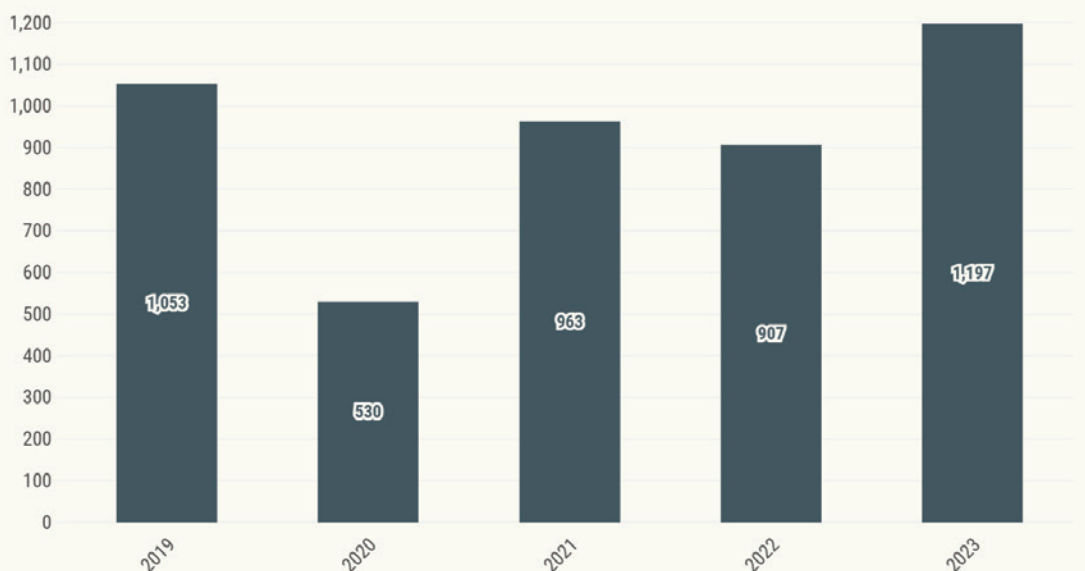
The New York City 15/15 Supportive Housing Initiative, launched in 2016, aims to develop 7,500 congregate units and 7,500 scattered-site units by 2030. Given the urgent need to provide enough supportive housing for the thousands of individuals and families who are eligible for, but unable to access, this critical resource, the Coalition has long urged the City to accelerate the timeline for these units. However, as of December 2023, 6,053 (81 percent of the 7,500 goal) of the congregate units and only 1,280 (17 percent) of the scattered site units have been awarded funding, suggesting that, at this pace, we may fall short of even this initial 2030 target.<sup>53</sup>

**Figure 2.9**

**Image Description:** A bar graph labeled “Supportive Housing Units Completed, Fiscal Years 2019 to 2023.” The vertical axis shows numbers from 0 to 1,200 in increments of 100. The horizontal axis lists fiscal years 2019 through 2023. Each year includes a dark blue bar with the number of supportive housing units completed in that fiscal year, with a value of 1,197 for fiscal year 2023.

**Figure 2.9**

### Supportive Housing Units Completed, Fiscal Years 2019 to 2023



Source: New York City Mayor's Office of Operations, Mayor's Management Report 2023: Department of Housing Preservation and Development



<sup>53</sup> Supportive Housing Network of New York, Reimagine NYC 15/15: A Comprehensive Reallocation Plan to Save New York City's Supportive Housing Initiative (2023), [https://shnny.org/uploads/Reimagine\\_NYC\\_1515\\_2023.pdf](https://shnny.org/uploads/Reimagine_NYC_1515_2023.pdf)



## 2. Expanding the Supply of Set-Asides

FY23 saw a welcome increase over previous years in the number of set-aside units financed and completed, as shown in figures 2.10 and 2.11.

The number of set-aside units financed and created in FY23 continued to increase from the pandemic-era lows in FY20 and subsequent years, for which the City deserves credit.

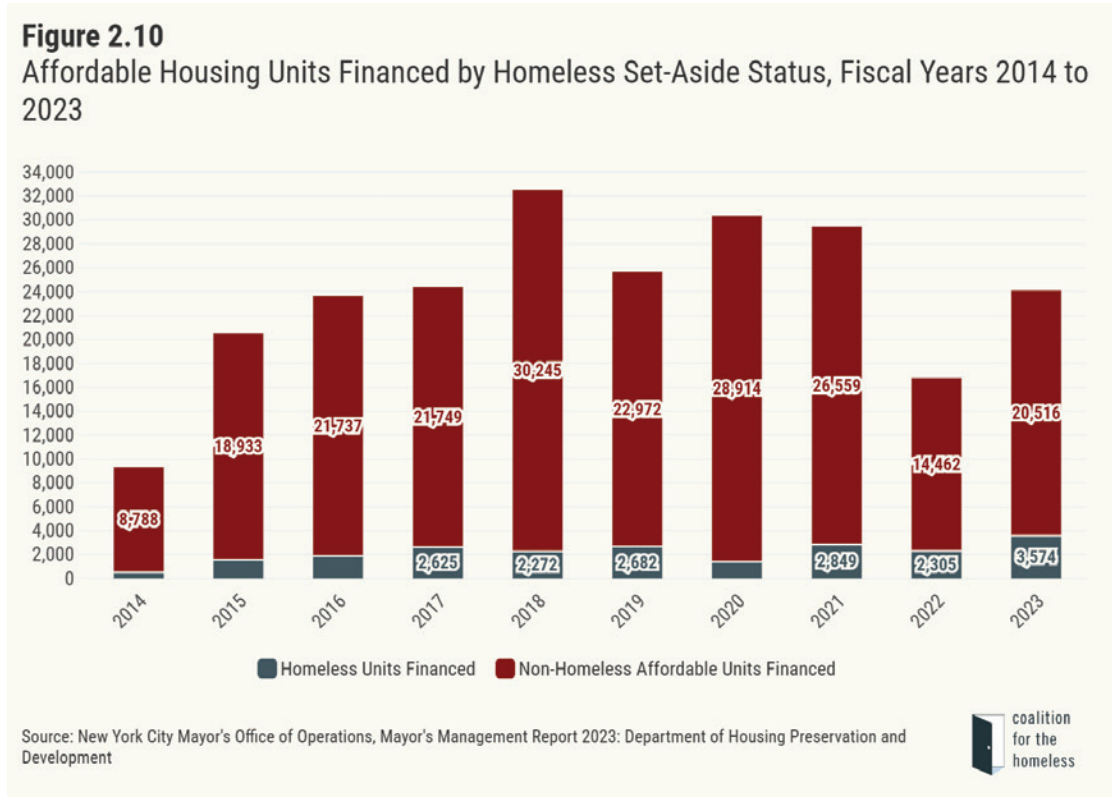
**However, the numbers are still far below the level needed to move the needle on mass homelessness in New York City.**

While the Mayor has been touting the “City of Yes for Housing Opportunity” proposal as a solution to the city’s affordable housing crisis, the proposal does not include any requirements for deep affordability. Building more market rate housing or encouraging the creation of more “affordable” housing for those earning 80 percent – or even 120 percent – of AMI will do next to nothing for the more than 350,000 people in NYC without homes. Trickle-down housing strategies do not work. To pull New York out of a five-decade-long crisis of increasing mass homelessness, we must prioritize those in the greatest need.

**To begin to reverse the trajectory of the crisis, the City should be financing at least 12,000 units of affordable housing per year for five years, targeted specifically to homeless and ELI households.**

**Figure 2.10**

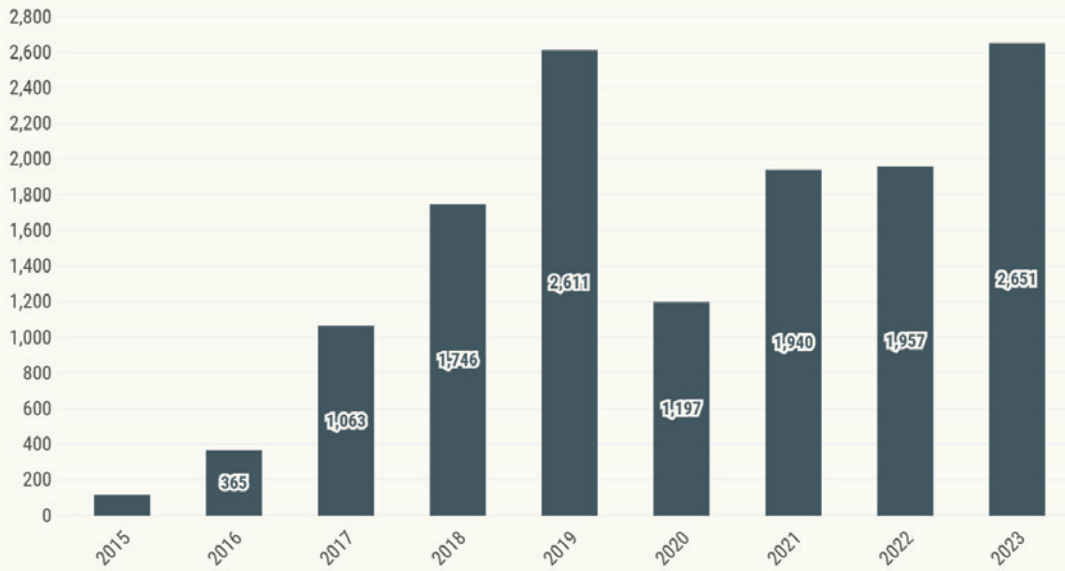
**Image Description:** A stacked bar graph labeled “Affordable Housing Units Financed by Homeless Set-Aside Status, Fiscal Years 2014 to 2023.” The vertical axis shows numbers from 0 to 34,000 rental units in increments of 2,000. The horizontal axis shows fiscal years 2014 through 2023. Above each year is a bar divided in two sections: the lower dark blue section represents the number of homeless set-aside units financed, with a value of 3,574 in fiscal year 2023; and the upper red section represents the number of non-homeless affordable housing units financed, with a value of 20,516 in 2023.



**Figure 2.11**

**Image Description:** A bar graph labeled “Set-Aside Units Completed, Fiscal Years 2015 to 2023.” The vertical axis shows numbers from 0 to 2,800 in increments of 200. The horizontal axis lists fiscal years 2015 through 2023. Each year includes a dark blue bar with the number of set-aside housing units completed in that fiscal year, with a value of 2,651 for fiscal year 2023.

**Figure 2.11**  
Set-Aside Units Completed, Fiscal Years 2015 to 2023



Source: New York City Mayor’s Office of Operations, Mayor’s Management Report 2023: Department of Housing Preservation and Development





# RECOMMENDATIONS

**Image description:** A large crowd of people march down a street. Some are holding signs or banners with messages related to homelessness and advocating for shelter rights. Many people are wearing beanies and jackets. Examples of signs read, “Save the Right to Shelter!”, “Shame on Mayor Adams”.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## PROVIDING SHELTER TO ALL IN NEED

### Mayor Adams must:

- Reduce the City’s reliance on large congregate facilities for homeless single adults by shifting the creation of new capacity toward single-occupancy accommodations with full accessibility features for those with disabilities, as well as low-barrier shelter designs such as Safe Haven shelters, which are more home-like and have better staffing for those with complex needs.
- Immediately cease placing single adults with serious mental illnesses in congregate facilities and allow those who are currently in congregate facilities to transfer to Safe Havens or other single room and low-density, low stimulus settings.
- Ensure that shelters are sufficiently staffed, and that staff are appropriately trained to help residents apply for public assistance benefits and secure permanent housing (Intro. 0440-2024).
- Improve the reasonable accommodation process for new arrivals and longer-term New Yorkers in shelter to ensure recognition of all types of disabilities (especially mental health conditions), greater transparency regarding procedures and decision making, inclusion of professionals with appropriate knowledge in assessing reasonable accommodations, and timelier determinations and fulfillment of granted requests.

### Governor Hochul must:

- Ensure that the Right to Shelter, which derives from Article XVII of the New York State constitution, is recognized and adhered to throughout the state.
- Raise the inadequate \$45 per month Personal Needs Allowances for those living in shelters that provide meals to the same amounts provided to all public assistance recipients (A.5507/S.8655).
- Reverse harmful cuts to New York City’s emergency shelter system that have resulted in the State short-changing the City by hundreds of millions of dollars over the past decade and ensure the State shares equally with the City in the costs of sheltering homeless families and individuals, and public assistance benefits generally.
- Use the full resources and authority of the State to ensure that asylum seekers and other newly arrived people are successfully resettled in New York City and communities across New York State by:
  - Appointing a resettlement czar equipped with the authority to work across agencies and coordinate with New York City to provide reception and resettlement services.
  - Creating, funding, and implementing a comprehensive statewide decompression and resettlement program.
  - Issuing an Executive Order to overturn racist and xenophobic county executive orders banning the relocation of new arrivals.
  - Equally sharing costs for sheltering new arrivals with New York City.
  - Ensuring that new arrivals are successfully securing employment either through the State Jobs Portal created by Governor Hochul or as part of her proposal to re-designate 4,000 available State jobs as “transitional jobs”.

## PROVIDING SHELTER TO ALL IN NEED

### Mayor Adams and Governor Hochul should together:

- Implement reforms to eliminate unnecessary and inhumane bureaucratic barriers to shelter for homeless families with children and adult families, which result in a majority of people seeking shelter being turned away.
- Increase the oversight of shelters by the State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance and the New York City Department of Buildings so that maintenance and poor conditions are promptly identified and addressed, and provide adequate funding for capital repairs.
- Ensure that there is Wi-Fi access in the private and common areas of all shelters in order that shelter residents have adequate internet access for education, employment, housing searches, health care, and other critical issues (S.4561-A/A.5649-A).
- Meet the needs of asylum seekers and other new arrivals by:
  - Ensuring that no one is sleeping on the streets or in the chairs or on the floors of waiting rooms.
  - Ending the practice of placing families in semi-congregate facilities.
  - Eliminating all limits on how long individuals and families can stay in shelter.
  - Ceasing the policy of moving individuals and families from shelter to shelter, to provide more stability to new arrivals and make it easier for them to receive important mail (like immigration documents), find housing and employment, and keep their children in school.
  - Increase the quality and quantity of case management services, including better information about, and assistance with, making reasonable accommodation requests.
  - Take further steps to ensure that students in shelter are not moved from shelters in their school district during the school year and that students are provided with free student Metrocards.

## HELPING HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS ACCESS PERMANENT HOUSING

### Mayor Adams must:

- Provide at least \$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, by:
  - 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.
- Get back on track with the goal to create 15,000 City-funded supportive housing units by appropriately funding units and services that meet a spectrum of needs.
- Increase the number of people accessing permanent, supportive housing and reduce placement delays by:
  - Establishing and implementing processes to ensure shelter providers are submitting supportive housing applications for all residents who would benefit from housing with supportive services.
  - Addressing ongoing problems with the failure of referral agencies to notify clients of placement interviews.
  - Improving data in the CAPS system on buildings, units, and eligibility requirements so people can be matched with available units more quickly and without unnecessary interviews.
- Revise the eligibility criteria for NYC 15/15 supportive housing, which currently uses the federal definition of “chronic homelessness,” in order that people leaving jails, prisons, or other institutions after stays longer than 90 days are not excluded.
- Implement the expansion of CityFHEPS eligibility passed by the New York City Council.
- Address the crippling bureaucratic obstacles that prevent homeless households from utilizing CityFHEPS vouchers in a timely way, including measures such as:
  - Creating easily retrievable records of shelter staff’s last efforts to assist a shelter resident obtain permanent housing.
  - Providing clear reasons and remedies for a unit’s failure to meet pre-clearance requirements.
  - Creating the position of a trained CityFHEPS intermediary to shepherd applications through the lengthy and complicated process to completion.
- Increase funding and staffing of the City Commission on Human Rights, which has seen a 73 percent reduction in its attorney staffing since 2018, to combat and investigate source of income discrimination and to implement and enforce the Fair Chance for Housing Act.
- Prevent evictions and ensure the right to counsel in housing court by funding the Universal Access program at sufficient levels and staying all proceedings until a person who is eligible for an attorney is assigned counsel.
- Eliminate the long turn-around times to re-lease NYCHA units after the prior tenant vacates and prioritize filling the 5,000 apartments that are sitting empty with households currently living in shelter.

## HELPING HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS ACCESS PERMANENT HOUSING

### Governor Hochul must:

- Pass the Housing Access Voucher Program to create a State-funded, long-term rent subsidy for homeless and ELI households (S568B/A4021).
- Increase the State’s public assistance rent allowance to meet fair market rent and expand access to State FHEPS as an entitlement
- Increase temporary assistance to individuals and families living in poverty, including:
  - Raising the amount of the cash assistance basic needs allowance that helps people pay for transportation, utilities, cleaning and personal care products, and clothing. Currently it is only \$183 per month for a single adult.
  - Increasing the shelter allowance, which is used to pay for housing costs, and has not been increased for households without children since 1988 and is currently \$215 for a single adult in New York City.
- Remove all State budget appropriation restrictions on New York City’s authority to claim reimbursement for all rent subsidy, rent supplement, public assistance, or other rental assistance programs.
- Accelerate the pace of production of the 20,000 units of supportive housing pledged by former Governor Cuomo in 2016 by fully funding the construction and operation of the remaining 11,600 units, and initiate a robust supportive housing preservation program to keep at least 9,000 units in service over the next 10 years.
- Expedite the development of 3,500 new OMH housing units authorized in the 2023-2024 State budget to ensure their rapid deployment to help ease the housing crisis for people with serious psychiatric disabilities.
- Pass legislation to allow New York City to offer CityFHEPS vouchers to people who are undocumented and often have been in shelter for years (S.1631/A.5531).

### Mayor Adams and Governor Hochul should together:

- Expand access to supportive housing and other permanent housing for adult families – a population with disproportionately high levels of disability and complex needs.
- Ensure effective reentry planning for individuals being released from court supervision, prisons, and jails by:
  - Ensuring that people who have received medical and mental health care on Rikers are released with a treatment plan and resources consistent with their needs and referred to appropriate housing.
  - Establishing a pathway for people to apply for safety net and other benefits prior to release and piloting an inside-out reentry pilot program that includes assistance with finding housing.
  - Increasing the amount of assistance people are given as they exit prison, known as “gate money” from \$40 to \$425 per month for a maximum of six months (S.6643A/A.9115).
  - Ending predatory court and parole fees, which work against the goal of rehabilitation and create a major barrier to people reentering society after a conviction (S.313/A.4183).
  - Ensuring there are enough SARA-compliant beds so that people are not held beyond their sentence.

## ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

### Mayor Adams must:

- Stop criminalizing homelessness:
  - Remove NYPD and the Department of Sanitation from all homeless outreach functions. Calls to 311 should only result in the deployment of properly trained outreach workers.
  - Cease encampment clearing operations and street sweeps and focus instead on outreach from trained workers to connect people to resources, especially low-barrier, single occupancy shelters and no-barrier Housing First program units.
  - Prohibit NYPD from issuing summonses or arresting people for public order offenses that are a direct result of their unsheltered status, such as creating bedding or temporary shelters and public urination.
- Open at least 4,000 new Safe Haven and stabilization beds in single-occupancy rooms and offer them to all unsheltered homeless individuals, with a focus on expanding the number of these facilities for women and transgender or gender-non-conforming individuals.
- Stop treating mental illness as a crime:
  - Cease pursuing the regressive practice of increasing involuntary removals and hospitalizations of unsheltered individuals, except where such determination is made by a qualified clinician.
  - Increase the transparency and efficacy of the B-HEARD program by releasing more information about the eligibility determinations made by 911 call-takers; dispatching B-HEARD teams for all appropriate cases, including at the caller's request; expanding hours and coverage; connecting more people to appropriate services in the community; and including peer responders on B-HEARD teams.
  - Invest in a spectrum of mental health services for those with the least healthcare access, including outpatient services, Intensive Mobile Treatment (IMT) and Assertive Community Treatment (ACT), and inpatient hospital care.

- Require city municipal buildings with readily accessible bathrooms to open facilities to the public during business hours (Intro. 0267-2024), create a capital plan to build public bathrooms at already identified sites (Intro. 0272-2024), and create a long-term plan and infrastructure to maintain a citywide public bathroom network (Intro. 0694-2024).
- Reform the process of providing outreach to unsheltered homeless individuals to a client-centered, harm reduction approach. This reform should include expanding the number of providers that conduct outreach in the subways, creating a role for peers to provide outreach services, and more coordination among outreach teams. Unsheltered people should also have the option to proactively engage with services instead of waiting for an outreach team to find them.

### Governor Hochul must:

- Immediately provide at least 1,000 additional new “Housing First” beds in New York City that fully adhere to the model of being barrier-free and are adequately funded at \$50,000 per unit per year for housing and services.
- Stop treating mental illness as a crime by passing Daniel’s Law (S.2398/A.2210) to provide culturally competent responses, led by peers (individuals with lived mental health experience), to those experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis.

### Mayor Adams and Governor Hochul should together:

- Halt the deployment of additional police and national guard in response to homeless people located in transit facilities and trains.
- Increase the number of inpatient psychiatric unit beds, starting with reopening all beds that were diverted to COVID-19 care, and assure that all admissions, whether for observation or inpatient care, include full care management and discharge planning services.
- Expand access to low-barrier physical and mental health care, including medical respite programs and street medicine.
- Provide free access to menstrual products in drop-in centers and other service locations frequented by unsheltered people.





coalition  
for the  
homeless

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