



**NYS Senate Joint Public Hearing on Rental Assistance:
Committees on Social Services, Housing, Construction & Community Development, and Aging
on February 18th, 2025**

Introduction and Thanks: My name is Eric Lee, and I am the Director of Public Policy for Volunteers of America- Greater New York (VOA-GNY). We are the local affiliate of the national organization, Volunteers of America, Inc. (VOA). I would like to thank Social Services Committee Chair Persaud, Housing, Construction & Community Development Committee Chair Kavanagh, and Aging Committee Chair Cleare as well as other members of these Committees, for the opportunity to submit written testimony.

About Us: VOA-GNY is an anti-poverty organization that aims to end homelessness in Greater New York through the provision of housing, health and wealth building services. We are one of the region's largest human service providers, impacting more than 12,000 adults and children annually through 70+ programs in New York City, New Jersey, and Westchester. Within New York City, VOA-GNY is one of the largest providers of homeless and domestic violence shelter services and of permanent supportive housing. We are an active nonprofit developer of supportive and affordable housing, with a robust portfolio of permanent supportive housing, affordable and senior housing properties- with more in the pipeline.

Volunteers of America-Greater New York strongly supports passage of S.72/A.1704 (Kavanagh/Rosenthal) to establish the Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP), and we urge the Legislature and Governor to include \$250 Million in SFY25/26 Budget to fund the program.

Thank you to Chair Kavanagh, Chair Persaud, Chair Cleare, and Members of the Committees for your unwavering leadership to establish statewide rental assistance which would give New Yorkers in both rural and urban areas the ability to prevent and end homelessness. The Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP) would **create a flexible, statewide Section 8-like voucher to be used by people at risk of or experiencing homelessness**. Given the recent uncertainty of Federal resources, New York needs more sources of rental assistance than CityFHEPS to flexibly address housing instability across the entire state. New York State can and must take immediate action to prevent New York's homelessness crisis from worsening by establishing and funding HAVP in this year's budget.

Cities and towns across the state will be able to use these vouchers to help people experiencing homelessness find permanent homes or issue them to low-income New Yorkers at risk of becoming homeless. Although HAVP largely mirrors the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher, it will be more inclusive as it will be available to people regardless of immigration status or criminal record. In addition to stabilizing individuals and families, HAVP will provide financial stability to building owners, ensuring a steady stream of rental income from low-income tenants. Further, a



report from Win found that, once fully implemented, HAVP could come with significant cost savings by offsetting shelter and other costs associated with eviction and homelessness.ⁱ

In January 2024, HUD estimated that there were 158,019 people experiencing homelessness across New York State.ⁱⁱ It is not just unhoused New Yorkers who are experiencing housing instability; following the expiration of the eviction moratorium and rental arrears coverage through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program, eviction filings grew nearly threefold in 2022 and as of January 12th, 2025, there are over 162,500 active eviction cases across New York State.ⁱⁱⁱ More than half (2.9 million households) of all renter households statewide are rent-burdened and 20 percent are severely rent burdened, paying 50 percent or more of their income on rent.^{iv}

Research shows rental vouchers reduce homelessness and housing instability,^v improve outcomes for children,^{vi} and promote beneficial outcomes for family well-being, including *halving* intimate partner violence.^{vii} Federal Housing Choice Vouchers reduce the poverty rate for recipients by 43%^{viii} and provide long-term benefits to households that previously experienced homelessness.^{ix} State and local rental assistance vouchers have a similarly stabilizing effect: in New York City, during FY23, 81% of families with children who exited shelter did so with subsidies – mostly the City’s local rental assistance voucher, CityFHEPS – and those that exited with subsidies were 53 times less likely to return to shelter in the subsequent year compared families who exited without assistance.^x

Despite the wealth of evidence about the positive effects of rental assistance, there are not nearly enough federal and local vouchers to meet the need in New York. Only one in four eligible households receive Housing Choice Vouchers and localities outside of New York City do not have their own local voucher programs, leaving households with little to no options to help them afford rent.

Research by both the NYU Furman Center for Real Estate^{xi} and Urban Policy and WIN,^{xii} t, finds that HAVP would provide close to 13,000 households with vouchers, helping thousands of New Yorkers and their families move out of and avoid homelessness.

We urge the Legislature and Governor to establish HAVP and provide \$250 million in funding for the program in the FY26 budget. **We urge the Legislature to immediately pass [S.72](#) (Kavanagh) / [A1704](#) (Rosenthal).**

Testimony respectfully submitted by Eric Lee, Director of Public Policy, Volunteers of America-Greater New York. Any questions can be directed to me at elee@voa-gny.org.

ⁱ Hannah Tager, Martin Gamboa, Chris Mann, “The Housing Access Voucher Program: Saving New York State \$200 Million and Preventing Homelessness for Tens of Thousands of New Yorkers Every Year” Win, <https://winnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/HAVP-Report.pdf>



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- ⁱⁱ Tanya de Sousa and Meghan Henry, Abt Global, The 2024 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress, Part 1: Point in Time Estimates of Homelessness, *The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development*, <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2024-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>
- ⁱⁱⁱ “NYS Eviction Crisis Monitor,” *Right to Counsel: NYC Coalition*, <https://www.righttocounselnyc.org/evictioncrisismonitor>
- ^{iv} “New Yorkers in Need – The Housing Insecurity Crisis,” *The Office of Budget and Policy Analysis, New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli*, February 2024, <https://www.osc.ny.gov/reports/new-yorkers-need-housing-insecurity-crisis>
- ^v Ingrid Ellen Gould, “What Do We Know About Housing Choice Vouchers?,” *The NYU Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy*, July 2018, https://furmancenter.org/files/fact-sheets/HousingChoiceVouchers_ige.pdf
- ^{vi} <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/aer.20150572>
- ^{vii} Douglas Rice, Major Study: Housing Vouchers Most Effective Tool to End Family Homelessness, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, July 2015, <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/major-study-housing-vouchers-most-effective-tool-to-end-family-homelessness#:~:text=Major%20Study:%20Housing%20Vouchers%20Most%20Effective%20Tool,to%20report%20incidents%20of%20domestic%20violence;%20and>.
- ^{viii} Sophie Collyer, et. Housing Vouchers and Tax Credits: Pairing the Proposal to Transform Section 8 with Expansions to the EITC and the Child Tax Credit Could Cut the National Poverty Rate by Half,” Center for Poverty and Social Policy, Columbia University Population Research Center, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5743308460b5e922a25a6dc7/t/5f7dd00e12dfe51e169a7e83/1602080783936/Housing-Vouchers-Proposal-Poverty-Impacts-CPSP-2020.pdf>
- ^{ix} Family Options Study: 3-Year Impacts of Housing and Services Interventions for Homeless Families,” U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Policy Development and Research, <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/family-options-study-full-report.pdf>.
- ^x Analysis of data from Mayor’s Management Report 2023, NYC.gov. Page 242, (https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2023/2023_mmr.pdf)
- ^{xi} Hayley Raetz, Jiaqi Dong, Matthew Murphy, Vicki Been, “A State-Level Rent Voucher Program,” *The NYU Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy*, https://furmancenter.org/files/publications/2_A_State-Level_Rent_Voucher_Program_Final.pdf
- ^{xiii} Hannah Tager, Martin Gamboa, Chris Mann, “The Housing Access Voucher Program: Saving New York State \$200 Million and Preventing Homelessness for Tens of Thousands of New Yorkers Every Year” <https://winnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/HAVP-Report.pdf>

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