



Testimony before the New York State Senate Joint Hearing of the
Committees on Housing, Aging, and Social Services

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Anthos | Home

Anthos|Home combats homelessness by partnering with government and social service agencies to help people with housing vouchers secure apartments more quickly. We leverage our unique financial capabilities to support tenants and landlords throughout the process.

www.anthoshome.org

Good morning, Chairpersons Cleare, Kavanaugh, and Persaud, and members of the joint committee. My name is Laura Lazarus, and I am the Chief Executive Officer of Anthos|Home. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and share insights about how we can improve housing outcomes for New Yorkers who use housing vouchers.

Anthos|Home is committed to helping New Yorkers using vouchers transition into permanent housing as quickly as possible. We know that housing vouchers are one of the most effective tools to address homelessness and housing instability. Still, they can be challenging to use. In partnership with New York City government, Anthos|Home is focused on changing that.

The New York City Department of Social Services has made significant progress toward expanding access to rental subsidies. In just a few years, the department successfully launched the CityFHEPS voucher program and scaled it to become the nation's second-largest rental subsidy initiative - placing 14,000 families in housing in the past year. By raising income eligibility limits, expanding access for single adults, and streamlining administrative processes, DSS has made it easier for more households to move out of shelters and into permanent housing. These changes have also helped organizations like ours to better connect voucher holders with available units, work with landlords to facilitate placements, and provide the long-term support necessary for housing stability.

Anthos|Home is focused on solving for the remaining barriers that prevent voucher holders from accessing stable housing. These issues are decades in the making and can prolong shelter stays and leave families in unsafe conditions. They include finding landlords willing to accept vouchers, delays in processing approvals and payments, and the need for more robust support services to help tenants succeed in maintaining their homes.

Our model helps tenants and landlords overcome those common roadblocks. Here is how it works:

We proactively reserve and prepare apartments through a network of landlords and brokers, ensuring families with vouchers can access housing options immediately. This is the first and only initiative of its kind in New York City. Additionally, our flexible funding model allows us to cover moving expenses, make necessary repairs to pass inspections, and furnish apartments—removing common roadblocks that prevent families from moving in quickly.

Our expert team also guides tenants and landlords through the often-complicated housing process. From assisting with paperwork to ensuring units and tenants are move-in ready, we streamline what can otherwise be a slow and disjointed process. Once families are housed, we provide wraparound support for at least a year. This includes monthly check-ins, help with repairs, and intervention if payment issues arise. By offering this ongoing support, we reduce the burden on landlords, allowing them to focus on property management while we handle tenant-related challenges.

This model has been especially effective for vulnerable populations, like foster youth and individuals with complex health needs, who often need specialized support to navigate the system and achieve stability.

In 2023, we partnered with the New York City Administration for Children's Services to support young people who have aged out of the foster care system. Our approach worked. To date, we have helped more than one hundred former foster youth secure dignified, stable housing, and all of them remain stably housed. Each element of the model—our partnership with the government, direct support of tenants, and working relationships with landlords—made this possible. We're in active discussions to bring our approach to other city agencies.

Programs like CityFHEPS are a critical resource; and their impact could be even more significant with targeted improvements. Increasing staffing to process vouchers more quickly and expanding landlord engagement efforts would significantly reduce

bottlenecks. At Anthos|Home, we've seen firsthand how these changes can lead to faster transitions and better outcomes for tenants and landlords.

We've just celebrated a major milestone - placing our 250th family in housing, with a roadmap to place thousands in the years to come. We have also significantly reduced the average wait time for tenants to as little as two months. This has created long-term stability for families and individuals who might otherwise cycle through unsafe conditions. As our team and partnerships continue to grow, we expect to unlock new efficiencies, bringing down costs and wait times even further. These successes demonstrate that targeted, well-supported interventions can make a measurable difference.

The success of CityFHEPS further demonstrates that rental assistance programs are an effective tool for combatting homelessness. The challenges that voucher holders face—finding landlords willing to participate, delays in approvals, and the need for ongoing support—are not unique to the city; they exist in communities across the state. Expanding a statewide voucher program would provide much-needed relief to households struggling with housing instability. Anthos|Home's work has shown that when landlords are encouraged to participate in the program and tenants have both the financial support of a voucher and the wraparound services to navigate the system, they are significantly more likely to secure and retain stable housing. By scaling this model beyond New York City, we can create lasting housing stability for families throughout the state.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I can answer any questions you have.