

**Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Housing
Written Testimony Submitted to the New York State Legislature
In Support of a \$5,000,000 FY 2026–2027 Appropriation for a Statewide Co-Sheltering
Grant Program**

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My name is Elizabeth Rose. I am submitting this testimony in support of including a \$5 million appropriation in the FY 2026–2027 New York State Budget to establish and fund a statewide co-sheltering grant program that allows families to remain safely with their companion animals while accessing shelter and housing services. My experience shows how life-saving it is for families to stay together with their pets while escaping violence and homelessness.

My name is Elizabeth Rose, I am a survivor of 11 years of child abuse and sexual assault, 5 years of domestic violence, and multiple years of legal court abuse by my abuser. I also faced homelessness with my child and cat due to the adversities I've faced. I eventually turned to addiction when the courts continued to fail me and protect my family. Overall — I am a survivor that beat all odds, and would not have without the programs that kept me together with my emotional support cat Bebe.

As soon as I was able to escape all my abusers with my cat and child, I didn't need unhealthy substances to numb the painful abuse. My cat became my new favorite substance. I didn't have an address, but I did have safety at the shelter with my family because of the Urban Resource Institute and the People and Animals Living Safely Programs.

Throughout my stay at Urban Resource Institute I experienced flashbacks and suicidal thoughts to end the after effects of domestic violence. I would jump from my sleep screaming and my cat Bebe would be right beside me, always. Bebe was and still is a part of my healing journey. Even now, being diagnosed with rare autoimmune diseases correlated to stress and abuse — he is still by my side to heal me.

When I was in the domestic violence shelter, on my second day, my abuser was sending me texts threatening me to throw my cat out onto the city streets. I didn't understand then, as I was experiencing PTSD and traumatic events — but I was extremely fortunate to have been placed within one of the very few domestic violence shelters that allow co-sheltering with pets in New York City.

Because of the co-sheltering program at Urban Resource Institute, my entire family was able to stay together, allowing my healing process for myself and my daughter to thrive. I had my cat Bebe for 11 years and my daughter for 9 years. We have all been safe since May 31, 2019 thanks to co-sheltering.

Setting aside funds to create more co-sheltering services matters because it will allow others to heal with their entire family and with the emotional support of their animals, like my child and I have now through our PTSD. Co-sheltering will also save animals' lives from abusers — abusers hurt pets too. This is a common tactic within domestic violence.

I respectfully urge the Legislature to include a \$5,000,000 appropriation in the FY 2026–2027 enacted budget to establish and sustain a statewide co-sheltering grant program so more families can survive, heal, and stay together the way mine did.