



**Testimony for William J. Simmons, President,
New York State Public Housing Authority Directors Association (NYSPHADA)
and Executive Director of the Syracuse Housing Authority**

**2022 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing
January 31, 2022**

Good afternoon. NYSPHADA is pleased to be back before the committee and we thank the legislature for all your support. As you know, for the last several years, NYSPHADA has been advocating for more funding from the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal (HCR) for public housing authorities in New York State. We are very grateful to the state for all the assistance the state has provided over the last two years. Last year, the legislature set aside \$125 million for public housing authorities in Upstate New York, and this will afford many more housing authorities the opportunity to modernize their facilities. We advocated strongly in 2016 for assistance as part of the 2017 legislation that provided \$2.5 billion in funding to advance the governor's \$20 billion, multi-year homelessness and affordable housing plan. This plan set aside \$125 million for substantial or moderate rehabilitation and/or the demolition and replacement through new construction of public housing authority developments outside of New York City. This funding was in addition to the resources already available through HCR's Unified Funding program and the Multifamily Open Window program. **Over the last two years, NYSPHADA members have accessed roughly \$200 million to help close deals for our members, including several Rental Assistance Demonstration projects (RAD) and other programs.** In her recent budget proposal, Governor Kathy Hochul offered a new 5 Year, \$25 Billion Comprehensive Housing Plan to replace the prior 5 Year plan and she sets aside \$150 million for Public Housing Authorities outside of New York City. While we are grateful for this proposal, we respectfully ask the Legislature and Executive for \$200 million. This will go a long way towards insuring our authorities have the resources they need to address their capital needs.

We are also here today to ask for help for our state-run public housing authorities. Mr. Chairman, as you know, we requested in last year's budget that the state set aside **\$544,000 for state-run public housing authorities that never received Covid relief**

funding. Mr. Chairman, we appreciate your and Senator Kavanagh's support of this effort, and we again ask that you include this in the upcoming budget.

Finally, we ask the legislature to prioritize public housing authorities for Emergency Rental Assistance program funding. As you know, the state statute S2506/A3006 currently singles out public housing authorities as last on the list for eligible funding, specifically stating that "occupants of federal or state funded subsidized public housing authorities or other federal or state subsidized housing that limits the household's share of the rent to a set percentage of income shall only be eligible to the extent that funds are remaining after all other eligible populations." We ask that the legislature amend the bill to remove such language and provide public housing authorities the ability to apply for this much-needed funding in a timely and efficient manner. Many of our tenants have opted not to pay their fair share of the rent, and this is causing our members to accrue a significant amount of debt. Moreover, should more ERAP funds become not available, we ask that New York State reassess the eviction protections in place for tenants who continue to not pay their rent.

For nearly three decades, NYSPHADA has proven successfully that public housing authorities, united together, are stronger than alone. We serve over 325,000 families and are proud to claim a membership of 73 public housing authorities from across the State of New York.

NYSPHADA promotes and protects the public and assisted housing industry. We work together to craft and implement effective strategies to influence state and federal policymakers. We also serve each of our members through educational opportunities, networking, and information sharing.

I am honored to represent NYSPHADA today and look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Best regards,

William Simmons, President
NYSPHADA