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Kavanagh, Cymbrowitz, Legislators, Advocates and Homeless New Yorkers Urge Governor Hochul to Join Legislature and Fund Housing Access Voucher Program

\$250 Million in Rental Assistance Approved by State Legislature Would Fund Major New Initiative Toward Ending Homelessness and Eviction Crisis

Albany, NY – Senator Brian Kavanagh and Assemblymember Steven Cymbrowitz, Chairs of the Senate and Assembly Housing Committees, were joined by colleagues in the Legislature, advocates, and New Yorkers who have experienced homelessness to call for the State budget to include \$250 million in funding for the Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP). The new program, the details of which are spelled out in bill [S2804B/A3701](#), would be a major new statewide initiative toward ending the crisis of homelessness and evictions.

Currently, more than 92,000 New Yorkers are experiencing homelessness. The proposal would provide enough funds to house 20,000 households, or over 40,000 people, in the first year of the program. Both the Senate and the Assembly included the \$250 million allocation in their budget resolutions passed on March 14th. Three-way negotiations are now underway among the Governor, the Senate, and the Assembly toward adopting a final budget by April 1st.

The legislation — authored and first introduced by Senator Kavanagh and Assemblymember Cymbrowitz in 2020 — would offer State-funded subsidies similar to federal Section 8, which provides rental assistance to help low-income families, people with disabilities, and the elderly afford apartments. Half of the HAVP funds would go to families on the verge of homelessness, allowing them to stay in their current homes. The other half would go to homeless New Yorkers, providing a path to permanent housing. Assistance would be available without regard to immigration status.

“It’s long past time for New York to do what we need to do to end homelessness,” said Senator Brian Kavanagh, Chair of the Senate Housing Committee and prime sponsor of the bill. “As we negotiate toward adopting the final budget by April 1st, the Governor and the Legislature have an opportunity to take a major step toward that goal, by providing more New Yorkers with permanent housing instead of shelters, and preventing evictions. HAVP will be cheaper, safer, and healthier than temporary shelter. There is nothing more urgent.”

“Families living in shelters currently face insurmountable challenges in trying to secure permanent housing,” said Assemblyman Steven Cymbrowitz. “Most apartments are out of families’ financial reach, and even if families are lucky enough to qualify for other rental assistance programs, there are long waiting lists and no apartments are immediately available to them. With upwards of 92,000 New Yorkers

who are already homeless and many more who are on the verge of homelessness, the need for this program has never been greater.”

“Homeless and housing insecure New Yorkers need permanent safe and affordable housing”, **said Senator Roxanne J. Persaud, Chair of the Senate Social Services Committee.** “Housing insecurity impacts New Yorkers in nearly every community across our state and, unfortunately, homelessness continues to rise. The Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP) will play a key role in combating homelessness in New York State.”

“Hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers are either homeless or at risk of homelessness due to the persistent affordability crisis, exacerbated by the economic impact of the pandemic, especially in BIPOC communities. The State Legislature’s proposed \$250 million in funding HAVP would help stabilize our communities, and move us closer to the goal of safe, decent affordable housing for every New Yorker,” **said Barika X. Williams, Executive Director of the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development (ANHD).**

“The Family Homelessness Coalition is extremely pleased to see the commitment of \$250 million for the Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP) in the One-House Budget Resolutions, and we strongly urge Governor Hochul to include this investment in the final budget to help end the chronic cycle of generational homelessness once and for all,” **said Jennifer March, Executive Director of Citizens’ Committee for Children of New York, a co-convenor of the Family Homelessness Coalition.** “Thousands of families continue to be at risk of falling into the cycle of homelessness and the life-altering trauma that comes with it due to the effects of the pandemic. The creation of this new permanent statewide subsidy will show all New York families, including our undocumented neighbors, that their elected leaders are serious about tackling the current homelessness and housing insecurity crisis and are willing to commit the necessary funds to keep families safe and stably housed.”

“Four decades into the crisis of modern mass homelessness, the time has come for New York to adopt the solution we know works. The Housing Access Voucher Program is the best state rent subsidy proposal we have seen, and the Coalition for the Homeless applauds Chairs Kavanagh and Cymbrowitz for delivering the resources we need. HAVP will keep extremely low-income people in their homes and, at the same time, help homeless individuals and families to secure and keep permanent housing they can afford,” **said Shelly Nortz, Deputy Executive Director for Policy with Coalition for the Homeless.**

“New York can’t afford *not* to pursue this important program to tackle our state’s crises of homelessness and housing unaffordability. HAVP offers us a permanent pathway toward preventing homelessness for low-income New Yorkers and rehousing those who are already experiencing the trauma of homelessness. It must be included in this year’s budget and expanded in future years,” **said David R. Jones, CEO and President of the Community Service Society.**

Baaba Halm, vice president and New York market leader, Enterprise Community Partners, said: “We applaud the New York State Senate and Assembly for including robust funding for the Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP) in their one-house budgets. In particular, we would like to thank Senate

Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, and bill sponsors Senator Brian Kavanagh and Assemblymember Steven Cymbrowitz for their commitment to combating housing instability across our state. HAVP is urgently needed to protect New York tenants from eviction and end homelessness, as our state was facing a crisis of housing instability long before the onset of the pandemic. HAVP will be an invaluable lifeline for individuals and families at risk of losing their homes, providing vital rental support in a state where too often the cost of housing far exceeds wages. We implore Governor Hochul to now include funding for HAVP in the state's final enacted budget to ensure this program is available to everyone who needs it."

"The Housing Access Voucher Program gives a needed hand up to working households and those without legal status living in shelter. Working households residing in shelter who don't earn enough to afford housing but too much to qualify for other vouchers would finally have a pathway to their own home. HAVP is critical for households without legal status as they have some of the longest lengths of stays in shelter due to their categorical ineligibility for other voucher programs. Homeless Services United applauds Senator Kavanagh and Assembly Member Cymbrowitz for their continued leadership, and we urge Governor Hochul to support this key legislation to ensure that more households have access to permanent housing throughout New York State," said **Eric Lee, Director of Policy and Planning of Homeless Services United.**

Judith Goldiner, Attorney-in-Charge of the Civil Law Reform Unit at The Legal Aid Society, said: "New York is facing an unprecedented housing and homelessness crisis, where tens of thousands of families across New York State are experiencing homelessness or on the brink of eviction. HAVP will serve as a critical tool to move people out of homeless shelters, prevent homelessness and keep families housed. We urge Governor Hochul to ensure that HAVP and its proposed allocation is adopted in the final budget come April 1."

Jennifer Hernandez, Lead Organizer of Make the Road New York, said, "The pandemic has devastated Black, brown, and immigrant communities, leaving tenants worried about paying their rent or losing their home. The Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP) is a crucial step forward that will allow New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status and who are on the brink of homelessness, to remain in their homes. We are pleased both the Senate and Assembly are working to address the state's housing crisis and call on Governor Hochul to invest in rental assistance in the state budget. The legislature should then swiftly pass Good Cause Eviction legislation to ensure tenants are protected. Housing is a human right and all New Yorkers deserve affordable and safe housing."

"At Neighbors Together, over 50% of our members are homeless, and for years they have been calling for a voucher that effectively moves people out of homelessness. The Housing Access Voucher Program would do just that by creating a statewide rental assistance voucher that pays fair market rent and provides real stability to housing insecure New Yorkers. The time is now to pass and fully fund the Housing Access Voucher Program in the state budget," said **Amy Blumsack, Director of Organizing & Policy at Neighbors Together.**

“A new rental subsidy is urgently needed to help NY renters get back on their feet post-pandemic and keep families in their homes. With both inflation and rents trending upwards, HAVP is the housing assistance we need right now to stave off homelessness and improve housing stability across the state,” said **Rachel Fee, Executive Director of the New York Housing Conference.**

“I have been placed in the Kings hotel since September of 2021. In those 35 months, the city and state of New York have paid nearly 140,000 dollars to keep me in a shelter,” said **Kassi Keith, VOCAL-NY Leader.** “With a Housing Access Voucher I could get an apartment of my own – focus on getting my mental and physical health in order and get back to work. I thank the Senate and Assembly for prioritizing the dignity and the safety of people like me by including HAVP in their 1-house budgets, and urge the governor to follow suit.”

“As one of the largest human services organizations in the region, our staff and clients know too well the challenges and limitations of existing voucher programs,” said **Myung Lee, President and CEO of Volunteers of America-Greater New York.** “The Housing Access Voucher Program would be one more weapon in the arsenal in combating homelessness, and its flexibility would allow us to place more of our clients in safe, permanent housing. We strongly encourage funding for this vital program in the final budget.”

“The widening gap between housing costs and income has remained a primary driver of the current homelessness and housing crisis impacting New Yorkers,” said **Beatriz Diaz Taveras, Executive Director of Catholic Charities Community Services.** “The Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP) would dramatically expand rental assistance to those on the verge of homelessness as well as those seeking permanent housing, ensuring we are providing our most vulnerable neighbors with an opportunity to get back on their feet. I commend State Senate Housing Chair Brian Kavanaugh and Assembly Housing Chair Steven Cymbrowitz for introducing this important legislation, and join in asking Governor Hochul to include funding in this year’s budget to support this vital program.”

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