

My name is Philip Malebranche and I am here to tell you that it has been an unbelievably hard year for folks who are struggling with housing in New York. Services are totally over run- from food pantries to the shelter system, itself. Tension is incredibly high, and the anger on the street is palpable. The truth, is that a horrible crisis that was allowed to fester for over 2 decades, is now combining with a pandemic and the situation is completely out of control.

Early at the start of this crisis, despite the weak eviction moratorium, thousands of people entered the shelter for the first time. Shelters that have been over crowded for a long time, suddenly were even more full, at a time when they were trying to create as much distance to each other possible. Things got a little better when the hotels opened up, but the tension is still there. Will people be moved from hotels back into over crowded, dangerous shelters, or will they finally be offered a pathway to a permanent home. Much of that decision rests in the hand of this body.

What is needed now, is a section 8 style voucher that allows for the maximum number of people to move into a permanent home. There is a bill that will do this- the housing access voucher program. Modeled after the most successful state voucher programs in the country, it would go a tremendously long way in offering hope to people who need it.

We also need more supportive housing. As a current supportive housing resident I know that it can be a life saver. It offers stability and a sense of autonomy at the same time. We are in a unique position to build more supportive housing- with thousands of hotels and office spaces unoccupied across the city, we can take over these properties and transform them into a permanent community good.

I have spent many years struggling with housing insecurity, but this has been one of the most difficult. We cannot let another year go by without action. Demonstrate you care about all new yorkers by passing the HAVP bill, and creating a plan to expand affordable housing. Thank you.