



When I was homeless for the last month and a half of 2018 and the majority of 2019, I had few consistent things in my life. On Thanksgiving weekend 2018 I lost my childhood home, close relationships with my family, and stable access to food among other things. My family and I were victims of gentrification, which pushed a mother and her three children out of their home in the middle of an NYC winter. Sleeping out of our car when my mother had work and me and my sisters had school wasn't a viable option. A shelter was not even up for discussion for my mother because she feared violence and exposing her daughters to other trauma and harm. We were fortunate to have a few family friends to stay with and funds to stay in hotels/motels in between.

That summer was one of the worst of my life and I truly cannot even describe the toxicity of my mental state and the person I was then.

My childhood home was without light 6 months before we losing it and there were often issues with the heat every winter. The apartment in Co-Op City was fine for the most part aside from the roaches that plagued the entire building and the random cuts to the hot water in winter that led me and the adults to heating water on the stove so the kids could go to school clean. The uptown Bronx apartment had the bathroom floor caving in on the apartment below and we were instructed to not go in at all which made trips to the bathroom anxiety-inducing.

At the time of being homeless, I was a full-time high school junior working a nearly full-time job who was isolated from her family and emotionally distant from most of her peers. Within a year of securing housing, my mental and physical health had improved and I found myself being immensely grateful that both my mother and I had kept our jobs and were not homeless in this time of COVID.

I count myself lucky to have had the experience with homelessness I did seeing as thousands across NYC and state have far more traumatizing and debilitating situations, particularly in this present moment.

My name is Asha Avery and I'm testifying today as a founding member of Youth Alliance for Housing (YAH), and a member of the Invest in Our New York Act steering committee. These are the words of my fellow YAH founder and New York City Public

School student. My testimony today is to call for support for the six invest in our new york bills, but it is really about what those bills could do.

The bills put forth by the coalition are not supposed to be short-term ways to deal with the impact of covid but yet are meant to create real revenue for a state plagued by an ever-growing deficit. No part of any of the 6 proposed bills would affect the working majority of new yorkers yet would update a tax code to provide revenue to support infrastructure. In one of the richest states in the country, the idea that 10% of the students in our biggest city's public school system are facing housing insecurity is a glaring sign of the deep economic inequality that has flourished over the last decades.