



Testimony of Juan Diaz

**Policy and Advocacy Associate Citizens' Committee for Children of New York  
Submitted to the Senate Finance, Assembly Ways and Means, Assembly and Senate Housing  
Committees  
March 1st, 2023**

Since 1945, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York has served as an independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe. CCC does not accept or receive public resources, supply direct services, or represent a sector or workforce. We document the facts, engage, and mobilize New Yorkers, and advocate for policy, budget, and legislative solutions that improve child and family well-being.

Thank you, Chair Krueger, Chair Weinstein, Chair Williams, Chair Kavanagh, Chair Rosenthal and all the members of the Senate Finance, Assembly Ways and Means, and Assembly and Senate Housing Committees for holding today's hearing on housing and for the opportunity to respond to the proposed FY2023-24 Executive Budget.

New York State is facing a severe housing and shelter capacity crisis. The eviction moratorium protection expired in January 2022, and eviction filings have risen dramatically. Rising rents and cost of living expenses place families with children at constant risk of homelessness. In New York City, shelter capacity is at an all-time high, and families with children are suffering the effects of unstable housing. For the seventh year in a row, over 100,000 New York City children experienced some form of homelessness, including 69,000 doubled-up and sharing the housing of others.<sup>i</sup> At the State level, the [CCC Family Wellbeing Index](#) revealed in that 49 counties, more than 20 percent of rental households spend at least half of their income on rent.<sup>ii</sup> With slow economic recovery affected by a 40-year high inflation rate and a cost of living significantly higher than the national average, too many families across the state are struggling, with families of color facing the greatest economic insecurity.

Governor Hochul's plan to build 800,000 new housing units in the next ten years – including funding for infrastructure, basement legalization assistance and changes to restrictive zoning practices – is a positive step towards securing long-term housing options for families. However, we are deeply disappointed that her Executive Budget proposal does not include investments in creating or enhancing existing programs that will immediately address the devastating housing crisis currently facing New York families by helping them stay in their homes.

**CCC supports legislation and funding to support families with children by preventing evictions, ensuring timely exits from shelter, and enabling more families to have access to housing stability, regardless of their immigration status:**

- **Fund the Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP) to create New York's first ever statewide rental subsidy program (S568A/A4021).** The proposed state-funded and administered housing voucher will provide rental assistance to eligible individuals and families, regardless of immigration status. The HAVP program will mirror Section 8 and cover more households than existing housing vouchers, at an income threshold of 50 percent of the Area Median Income. It is estimated that once the program is fully implemented, over 13,000 households will receive housing assistance at an approximate yearly cost of

\$250 million. The number of HAVP vouchers will be equally distributed to both households in shelter and those at risk of eviction who are paying over half of their income in rent.<sup>iii</sup>

- **Require and fund social services districts to increase shelter allowances to match one hundred percent of the Fair Market Rent Standard and raise the allowance every time the market rents increase (S02982).** This policy would allow vulnerable families to remain in their apartments and not face ongoing rental arrears that could potentially initiate housing court evictions. Families with children receiving cash assistance grants face frequent housing instability as the shelter allowance is extremely low in comparison to rising housing market costs. For instance, a family of three in New York City currently receives \$400 in monthly shelter allowance assistance, and a family in Albany receives \$309,<sup>iv</sup> leaving far too many very low-income families with a monthly rent portion of over \$1,000. Furthermore, the shelter allowance for families with children has not kept up with the Federal Market Rent Standard (FMR) since 2003.<sup>v</sup> The rising costs of rent and basic needs throughout the state call for an immediate enhancement of the shelter allowance, and for that allowance to be indexed to reflect the local FMR moving forward.

- **Permit certain housing programs like CityFHEPS to be made available to individuals and families regardless of immigration status (S1631).** Throughout the State, undocumented families continue to struggle with accessing affordable housing, leading to overcrowded apartments, evictions, and homelessness. This legislation will permit municipalities with over 5 million residents like New York City to expand housing subsidies to undocumented households. A [2022 CCC Housing Data Analysis of NYC](#) revealed that immigrant households were twice as likely to reside in overcrowded housing, over half of the city's 1.7 million children reside in a household led by an immigrant parent, and over 52 percent of these households are rent burden or spend more than 30 percent of their income in rent.<sup>vi</sup> Expanding CityFHEPS access to undocumented families will provide thousands of children with the opportunity to thrive in the surroundings of stable and affordable housing.

- **Increase funding for ERAP to address over 100,000 pending applications.** The Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) prevented over 226,000 evictions during the Covid-19 pandemic, for a total cost of \$3.1 billion in State and Federal funding.<sup>vii</sup> However, over 100,000 applications are still pending, and these households are at risk of eviction due to the expiration of the State's eviction moratorium. The overwhelming portion of ERAP applications were submitted in the most marginalized areas in New York City, yet most of the public housing and NYCHA residents were ignored during the approval process, leaving tens of thousands of households at imminent risk of eviction.<sup>viii</sup> The FY 2023 Budget included \$800 million for ERAP assistance.<sup>ix</sup> A similar amount should be included in FY 2024 to help cover a great portion of the pending applications. Additionally, advocacy at the federal level is imperative to help fund the entire pending applications and prevent an even greater number of families with children at risk of homelessness.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and for your commitment to combat longstanding housing and shelter challenges for vulnerable children and families.

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<sup>i</sup> “Student Homelessness In New York City, 2021–22.” Advocates for Children of New York. (2022). Retrieved from: [https://www.advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/library/nyc\\_student\\_homelessness\\_21-22.pdf?pt=1](https://www.advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/library/nyc_student_homelessness_21-22.pdf?pt=1)

<sup>ii</sup> “Child and Family Well-being in New York State (2023). Citizens’ Committee for Children of New York Data Publications. Retrieved from: <https://cccnewyork.org/data-publications/cfwbny2023/>

<sup>iii</sup> Raetz, H., Dong, J., Murphy, M., Been, V., “A State-Level Rent Voucher Program” (2023). NYU Furman Center. Retrieved from: [https://furmancenter.org/files/publications/2\\_A\\_State-Level\\_Rent\\_Voucher\\_Program\\_Final.pdf](https://furmancenter.org/files/publications/2_A_State-Level_Rent_Voucher_Program_Final.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup> NY State Shelter Allowance N.Y. Comp. Codes R. & Regs. tit. 18 § 352.3 (2023). Retrieved from: <https://casetext.com/regulation/new-york-codes-rules-and-regulations/title-18-department-of-social-services/chapter-ii-regulations-of-the-department-of-social-services/subchapter-b-public-assistance/article-1-determination-of-eligibility-general/part-352-standards-of-assistance/section-3523-rent-allowances>

<sup>v</sup> Last New York Shelter Allowance Increase for Families with Children. Bill S02982. Retrieved from: <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2023/S2982>

<sup>vi</sup> Housing Insecurity in New York City, 2021. (2022). Citizens’ Committee for Children of New York. Data Report. Retrieved from: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.cccnewyork.org/2022/11/CCC-Factsheet-on-Housing-Security-Immigrant-Households.pdf>

<sup>vii</sup> “New York State Emergency Rental Assistance Program Reports” (2023). New York State Government. Retrieved from: <https://otda.ny.gov/programs/emergency-rental-assistance/program-reports.asp>

<sup>viii</sup> Iziah Thompson and Marquis Jenkins. (2023) “Opinion: Thousands of NYCHA tenants forgotten under Emergency Rental Assistance Program”. City and State New York. Retrieved from: <https://www.cityandstateny.com/opinion/2023/01/opinion-thousands-nycha-tenants-forgotten-under-emergency-rental-assistance-program/381976/>

<sup>ix</sup> “Governor Hochul Announces \$2 Billion in Reserve Pandemic Recovery Funding in the FY 2023 Budget”. (2022). New York State Government. Retrieved from: <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-announces-2-billion-reserve-pandemic-recovery-funding-fy-2023-budget>