



**Testimony of Juan Diaz
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York**

**Submitted to the New York State FY 2025 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on
Housing
February 14th, 2024**

Since 1944, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York has served as an independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring every New York child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe. CCC does not accept or receive public resources, provide direct services, or represent a sector or workforce; our priority is improving outcomes for children and families through civic engagement, research, and advocacy. We document the facts, engage and mobilize New Yorkers, and advocate for solutions to ensure the wellbeing of New York's children, families, and communities.

Thank you, Chair Weinstein and Chair Krueger, as well as Chair Hevesi, Chair Brisport, Chair Persaud, Chair Davila, Chair Rosenthal, Chair Kavanagh, and all the members of the Assembly Ways and Means, Senate Finance, Assembly and Senate Children and Families, and Assembly and Senate Housing Committees for holding today's Joint Hearing today and allowing us the opportunity to respond to Governor Hochul's Executive Budget.

New York State is immersed in housing affordability and shelter capacity crises that demand timely investments to secure housing and economic stability for families with children. Since the end of eviction moratorium, tens of thousands of households have been evicted statewide, and in New York City alone, over 12,000 households were evicted by City Marshalls.ⁱ

In 2023, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (CCC) released the [“Child & Family Well-being in New York State”](#) index, a comprehensive report that examines county-level data on economic security, housing stability, health care, education, youth, and families and communities. The report revealed that in 49 counties in the state, more than 20 percent of rental households spend at least half of their income on rent.ⁱⁱ The ongoing rising costs of living present difficult choices for burden for low and middle-income families in New York State. Findings from this report serve as an indicator to urgently invest in housing support for families and communities.

We applaud the Governor's inclusion of \$2.4 billion in the Executive Budget to support shelter-related costs for migrants in NYC in need of temporary assistance. Additionally, we support the inclusion of \$500 million to develop 15,000 affordable housing units in state-owned properties. However, these investments do not go far enough to provide immediate solutions for families with children across the state that are struggling with the risk of eviction or residing in shelters.

Therefore, we urge the State Government to pass and fund the following policy/program alternatives:

- **Support and fund a Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP), to create a state-wide housing voucher (S568B (Kavanagh)/A4021A(Rosenthal)).** This voucher would operate much like the federal Section 8 program and would assist populations residing in shelters and to remain housed. A commitment of \$250 million toward HAVP would have a transformative impact, aiding nearly 15,000 families or individuals in exiting or preventing homelessness. The Housing Trust Fund Corporation will oversee this Program, and State and local public housing agencies will administer the program. This is the first step to creating a state funded program that will support families who oftentimes fall through the cracks of eligibility for subsidies like FHEPS (families with children with a CA case) and CityFHEPS (shelter history, housing court eviction).
- **Increase the Public Assistance housing allowance** to a level that stabilizes housing for vulnerable families in receipt of cash assistance. Currently the PA housing allowance is \$347 for a household of four and was last adjusted twenty years ago.
- **Return to a shared state-local funding partnership on all shelter costs.** In recent years, the state financial support for New York City shelter-related costs has decreased. This has harmed the ability of the city to provide services to families with children living in shelters, returning to a shared state-local funding structure is essential to providing shelter services to families in need.

The State Budget should also prioritize tenant protection funding and reforms. The enhancement of legal assistance resources and reforms to lease protections are imperative to protect the housing stability of families with children at risk of displacement.

Conclusion

The recommendations in this testimony will improve the housing stability for New York children and families. We urge state leaders to implement these investments and policy changes in the FY25 State Budget. Thank you for your time and consideration.

ⁱ “NYC evictions surged in 2023, with legal lockouts nearing pre-COVID levels”. Brand, David. Gothamist online. January 11, 2024. <https://gothamist.com/news/nyc-evictions-surged-in-2023-with-legal-lockouts-nearing-pre-covid-levels>

ⁱⁱ <https://cccnewyork.org/data-publications/cfwbny2023/>