



**Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Housing
February 14, 2024**

**Testimony of Rashida Tyler, Interfaith Affordable Housing Collaborative
Testimony**

My name is Rashida Tyler. I am the Project Manager for the Interfaith Affordable Housing Collaborative (IAHC) and Partnership for Faith-Based Housing and Community Development ("The Partnership").

The IAHC and Partnership were created to help faith-based organizations respond to the housing and homelessness crisis in their communities by providing them access to technical assistance and pre-development funds to utilize faith property to develop affordable housing. With a critical shortage of affordable and supportive housing in New York State, IAHC augments the efforts of local and state governments and affordable housing developers to partner with faith-based organizations to create more affordable housing that stabilizes and strengthens our neighborhoods. We help connect, educate, and engage faith-based organizations on public policy issues (including zoning, comprehensive plans, budget, financing) in connection with affordable housing and homelessness. The IAHC is a statewide organization and the Partnership serves faith-based organizations from NYC to the Capitol Region.

Although it is well known that New York has been in a housing crisis for many years, post-pandemic the crisis is deepening at an alarming rate. According to the Fiscal Policy Institute, housing prices have increased 40% in the three years since the pandemic. The 2023 HUD Point-In-Time Count, which only captures data on homelessness on one day in January each year, found that more than half of all people experiencing homelessness in the country were in four states: California (28% of all people

experiencing homelessness in the U.S, or 181,399 people); New York (16% or 103,200 people); Florida (5% or 30,756 people); and Washington (4% or 28,036 people).

In NYC, the average shelter stay is 437 days for families and 412 days for single adults. Lack of affordability is the leading cause of homelessness. According to the Statewide Eviction Dashboard, last year in 2023 there were 212,464 eviction filings in New York State and there have already been 12,934 filings since January 1, 2024. Overall, there have been 859,882, nearly 1 million eviction filings since the tracker's inception in 2019. These numbers are not inclusive of all courts or the number of illegal or constructive evictions that occur each year.

It should come as no surprise that this is impacting our state and faith-based institutions in unprecedented ways:

According to the US Census Bureau, New York's population declined by 102,000 people—the steepest decline in the nation. Since 2020, New York has lost over 500,000 people. Over 500,000 of our friends, family, neighbors, parishioners, students, and workers.

Post-COVID, FBOs face economic pressures, with over 50% of some pastors citing a negative impact on their congregation. Attendance at religious services is decreasing, and although giving remains stable, rising operating costs are affecting houses of worship.

The Housing Crisis can be seen as three crises in one: First, a lack of vacancy or housing stock—the physical number of safe, quality housing units. Second, The lack of affordability—those units that are available are unaffordable to the average New Yorker; and Third, the most significant as it impacts the other two areas, is the lack of will. This includes NIMBY-ism or the lack of willingness to ensure there is enough affordable housing in local communities. It also includes a lack of political will, those who are unwilling to work across party lines or give certain ideas a chance because they originate with representatives from one party or the other.

As such, we urge each and every elected official to start with the premise that housing is a basic human need and right. There is no one solution for New York's housing crisis, rather the IAHC supports a comprehensive housing plan that takes each community's unique character and needs into consideration. We support policies that encourage the production of housing affordable to the vast majority of New Yorkers, preserve the current affordable housing stock, and policies that prevent further homelessness and displacement.

- **Lack of Safe, Quality Housing can be addressed through the following policies and Budget areas that promote the production of new housing:**

The missions of many faith-based organizations call for them to take action to help feed, clothe, and shelter those in need. We have worked with faith leaders across New York state in rural, suburban, and urban communities, all of whom would like to find ways to assist their communities by creating housing. Although there is the will there are many impediments to doing so, such as zoning laws that prevent projects from being considered viable to those who would like to build.

- **Faith-Based Affordable Housing Act (S7791/ A8386)**- We strongly support the Faith-Based Affordable Housing Act that would enable religious organizations to utilize their property to develop mixed-income and 100% affordable housing. The bill would provide comprehensive training for congregations and financial support through pre-development grants. The Faith-Based Affordable Housing Act would allow faith communities in population dense centers outside of New affordable housing. However, we are open to amendments to ensure labor Unions and prevailing wage are included and want to be sure that communities across the state are able to contribute their ideas to improve the legislation.
- **Redevelopment of Underutilized Sites for Housing (NY-RUSH)** - We are encouraged by incentivization of housing development in the Executive Budget and support the Redevelopment of Underutilized Sites for Housing (NY-RUSH) which provides \$250 million to support the repurposing of property owned by state agencies for use as housing.
- **485-x or Affordable Neighborhoods for New York budget bill.** We support 485-x as a replacement for 421-a, which was the single most effective mechanism for housing creation in many years, but was in need of much deeper levels of affordability. We are encouraged that 485-x provides flexibility for local officials, unions, and developers. Social Housing- We support investment in the creation of Social Housing. While we applaud the idea of Social Housing, we feel existing entities such as HCR should house this program best to study all models and administer and fund the creation of social housing using a range of financing tools. Increase funding for Homeownership-iWhile we are grateful for the 5-year housing plan, the amount allocated needs to be increased. We believe Triple the amount Increased funding for The state needs to improve its funding of owner-occupied homeownership to fill the financing gap to fill the cost gap

between constructions. This is particularly important in blighted communities in New York State with property in need of significant renovation.

- **Preserving Current Affordable Housing Stock Tenant Opportunity to Purchase (TOPA)**- IAHC supports TOPA establishes the "tenant opportunity to purchase act"; prevents the displacement of lower-income tenants in New York and preserves affordable housing by providing an opportunity for tenants to own or remain renters in the properties in which they reside. Increased funding for maintenance of Public Housing throughout the state.
- **Preventing Displacement and Homelessness Right to Counsel (S2721)**- The IAHC strongly supports the Statewide Right to Counsel and the budgetary request of \$260 Million to establish the New York State Office of Civil Representation to provide access to legal services in eviction proceedings. RTC would help approximately 46,600 tenant households outside New York City receive legal representation under a statewide eviction Right to Counsel. Right to Counsel makes it harder for landlords to use evictions as a tactic to harass and displace tenants. Implementation of a statewide eviction Right to Counsel could decrease eviction filings outside New York City by at least 19%. Housing Access Vouchers-Housing Access Voucher Program (S568B)- The Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP) will provide rental assistance to all New York families and individuals, regardless of immigration status who are at risk of – or are already experiencing homelessness. Protect the Right to Shelter

I strongly urge the legislature to consider supporting each of these policies, while And to understand that the housing crisis is the defining crisis of this generation and we need to act now.

Sincerely,
Rashida Tyler
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Partnership for Faith-Based Affordable Housing