



**New York Shelter for All in Need Equally Coalition Testimony for the
Joint Legislative Public Hearing on 2024 Executive Budget Proposal: Topic Housing
February 14, 2024**

Background on [NY SANE](#):

Thank you to Chairs Kavanagh and Rosenthal and to the esteemed members of the state legislature Committees on Housing for the opportunity to submit testimony. **We are the New York Shelter for All in Need Equally Coalition, or NY SANE, a group of over 100 religious leaders, organized labor leaders, and advocates united in defending the right to shelter in New York.** NY SANE is co convened by the Episcopal Diocese of New York, Win, The Legal Aid Society, the Coalition for the Homeless, and African Communities Together. Other notable members include 1199SEIU, UAW 9A, New York Doctors, RWDSU, Trinity Church Wall St. Robin Hood Foundation, and CSS.

Since its inception over four decades ago, the right to shelter has prevented an estimated one million New Yorkers from sleeping on the streets.ⁱ The policy has also stopped New York City from experiencing the mass street homelessness seen in other major urban areas, which can impact commercial business and result in increased emergency healthcare and criminal justice costs.ⁱⁱ The right to shelter is also an overwhelmingly popular humanitarian protection, and a HarrisX poll found that the vast majority of New York City residents (79%) support the right to shelter.ⁱⁱⁱ In addition to supporting the right to shelter, conveners of the NY SANE Coalition respectfully request that the State Legislature take the following measures to address homelessness and the new arrivals:

The state legislature must pass S8493, sponsored by Brad Hoylman-Sigal, and A9129, sponsored by Catalina Cruz, to prohibit the imposition of limits on the length of stay at homeless shelters and emergency congregate housing. The current 30- and 60-day time limits imposed by the Adams administration have forced migrants to sleep on the street during the winter months, disrupted children's education, and displaced families far from their established communities. The constant uprooting of migrant students compounds their trauma and creates chaos within schools themselves as teachers are forced to manage changing class compositions. Additionally, these cruel rules are impeding the integrity of our immigration system, as shelter evictions make it effectively impossible for asylum seekers to have a stable address at which they can receive their work authorization and legal papers. The state legislature must intervene to stop the 30- and 60-days rules and prevent further erosion of the right to shelter.

As a coalition, we recognize that the right to shelter is a floor, not a ceiling. The only real answer to mitigating homelessness is housing, and we ask the state legislature to fashion policies that will promote sustainable housing solutions. **The State must further invest in and amend the Migrant Relocation Assistance Program (mrap).** The current program, which allocates \$25 million to resettle 1,250 migrant families, has moved fewer than 100 families out of shelter and



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into housing. This is a testament to the current flaws in the program, which only guarantees rental assistance for up to a year and seems to allocate less than \$2,000 towards a family's monthly rent. Additionally, eligibility depends on work authorization status, which limits eligible families and assumes a level of stability unachievable for many migrants. For it to actualize its potential, the MRAP program needs to receive funding to cover at least two years of rent and be revised to relocate asylum seekers before they get their work permit. MRAP can be an effective tool, but only if steps are taken to rectify its issues.

Additionally, a state-funded housing voucher is necessary as part of holistic solution to slow the shelter census and open safe and quality beds for migrant families who need emergency shelter. HAVP would direct \$250 million in the state budget to create a flexible, statewide Section 8 like voucher to subsidize housing for the lowest income New Yorkers, both for those currently experiencing homelessness and for those at risk of eviction. A new state-level program would address the need for rental subsidies and expand the current reach of vouchers, as HAVP would be available to at-risk households regardless of immigration status or criminal record. We also encourage the legislature to promote the state-wide use of CityFHEPS vouchers in their counties, which would relieve the New York City shelter system and bring reliable rental subsidies to other counties.

Finally, we ask the state legislature to respond to this crisis as they would any other humanitarian emergency. **The immigration influx warrants a comprehensive state-run case management program as is precedent in crises.** The state should utilize the Community Services Block Grant to fund emergency response nonprofits and designate navigators and points of contacts for these organizations. A comprehensive decompression plan overseen by the State is necessary to efficiently solve a state-wide crisis.

Ultimately, these enumerated measures are necessary to not only uphold the right to shelter but to save the lives of New Yorkers across the state. The piecemeal approach to the migrant crisis has resulted in unsafe conditions for families with children and an increase in street homelessness. The Mayor and Governor are attesting the elimination of this right as a necessary solution to the migrant crisis. However, contrary to their claims, eliminating the right to shelter would have no impact on the global forces that are driving migration to New York City, which has and always will attract waves of immigrants. Eliminating the right to shelter will only give rise to an increase in street homelessness and, with it, an increase in children living and dying on the streets of New York City.

ⁱ Richard R. Buery, Jr., CEO of robin Hood at *Help USA, UPSTREAM: Frontline Solutions to Homelessness*, January 31, 2024.

ⁱⁱ Megan Cerullo, "166-year-old San Francisco luxury store threatens to close over 'unsafe' street conditions," *CBS NEWS*, August 16, 2023. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/san-francisco-gumps-luxury-store-could-close-homelessness/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Elizabeth Kim, "Nearly 80% of New Yorkers back right to shelter, poll finds," *Gothamist*, January 9, 2024. <https://gothamist.com/news/nearly-80-of-new-yorkers-back-nyc-right-to-shelter-poll-finds>