



Testimony of Patrick Boyle
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To the New York State Senate and New York State Assembly

Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Housing

February 27, 2025

My name is Patrick Boyle and I am Senior Director for the New York office of Enterprise Community Partners, a national nonprofit that exists to make a good home possible for the millions of families without one. We support community development organizations on the ground, aggregate and invest capital for impact, advance housing policy at every level of government, and build and manage communities ourselves. Since our New York office opened in 1987, we have committed more than \$5.7 billion in equity, loans and grants to affordable housing and community to create or preserve nearly 84,000 affordable homes across New York State. On behalf of Enterprise, we would like to thank Chair Rosenthal and Chair Kavanagh, as well as Senate Finance Committee Chair Liz Krueger and Assembly Ways and Means Committee Chair J. Gary Pretlow for the opportunity to testify today on State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2025-26 budget and to speak on the tremendous housing needs that New Yorkers currently face.

Overview

Last year's budget and subsequent legislative session saw the enactment of important housing measures, including office-to-residential conversions, support for Accessory Dwelling Units, renewed tax incentives for rental development, and reform to New York City's Floor Area Ratio cap. And while there were other steps taken, for example expansions to tenant protections, by and large the most substantial actions were centered around encouraging housing supply.

Housing supply is a core priority of Enterprise and a necessary component of reversing our housing crisis. Indeed, we recommend additional actions to further this goal. However, the bulk of this testimony will focus on priority areas that now must take center stage in this year's session. These are housing access and homeless reduction, affordable housing preservation, and strengthening fair housing.

Facing an uncertain federal landscape, leaders in Albany should be focused on these core priorities to meet some very real needs.

Housing Access and Homelessness Reduction

As entities from the New York State Comptroller to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) have recently concluded, homelessness is at a historic crisis point in New York. Our state's homelessness rate more than doubled from January 2022 to January 2024, and we are at or near the top of the nation in many leading metrics around homelessness.

The proposed Executive Budget is inadequate in responding to this reality. We urge a number of measures to meaningfully reduce homelessness and housing instability and increase housing access.

➤ **\$250mm for the Housing Access Voucher Program (S. 72 / A. 1704).**

- This must be the year that the final budget finally enacts the Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP), a flexible rental assistance program that estimates show would prevent homelessness for around 13,000 families statewide. The program is designed to reach households not served by existing voucher programs, to help those who are both currently homeless and at-risk of homelessness, and to be designed and administered in a flexible manner.

Our housing and homelessness crisis demands that we do more to prevent and reduce homelessness. HAVP is the most meaningful step in that direction.

➤ **\$47.3mm for Housing Navigation and Related Supports to Improve Voucher Utilization.**

- Rental assistance vouchers are a key tool in helping low-income New Yorkers find and secure permanent housing. However, for existing resources like Sec. 8 Housing Choice Vouchers and CityFHEPS, utilization rates—or the ability for those with vouchers to find housing and successfully work through the approval process before deadlines pass—are far too low.

We recommend a new program to fund housing navigators at both nonprofit organizations and Public Housing Authorities (PHAs). Housing navigators are demonstrably proven to greatly increase the ability of voucher holders to find and secure housing wherever they have been utilized.

This proposed funding would allow for all voucher holders who are seeking housing in New York State to have the help they need to secure housing, and also encompasses other pots of funding to incentive landlords to participate and help PHAs to modernize and streamline processes.

➤ **Advance the Recommendations of the Childhood Poverty Reduction Advisory Council (CPRAC).**

- The CPRAC recommended a series of measures to reduce childhood poverty in New York by 50 percent, including funding for rental assistance, enhancement of existing benefits programs, and streamlining efforts.

Household poverty contributes to housing insecurity and homelessness. Enterprise recommends that the full suite of measures recommended by the Council be advanced this year.

➤ **\$50mm for the Shelter Arrears Eviction Forestallment (SAEF) Program.**

- Through conversations with partners and our own Enterprise asset management data which tracks the financial performance of affordable housing projects statewide, Enterprise has observed persistent levels of rent arrears that exceed historical norms. Too many tenants around the state have still not financially recovered from the disruptions associated with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Bolstering the SAEF program will help address rent arrears for households at risk of homelessness in areas outside New York City, which are often less rich in anti-eviction resources.

➤ **\$2mm Demonstration Program to Mitigate the Benefits Cliff.**

- Enterprise supports initiatives to mitigate the “benefits cliff,” in which low-income New Yorkers are forced to choose between higher wages and keeping means-tested public benefits. In this year’s budget, we encourage funding as proposed by the Governor for the Monroe Ladder Demonstration program. This pilot will provide work incentive payments and financial counseling to low-income residents of Monroe County to offset any potential loss of benefits, and could serve as a model for addressing benefits cliff issues across greater New York.

➤ **Establish the Affordable Senior Housing Assistance Program (S. 956 / A. 1948).**

- Aging New Yorkers in older senior housing properties often do not have the level of services needed to allow them to age-in-place with dignity and the proper connections to resources. This program would allow for light-touch services for these properties and bring increased housing stability to an at-risk population.

Affordable Housing Preservation

Persistent rent arrears and increased expenses, including property and liability insurance, utilities, and repair costs, have contributed to significant strain on much of the affordable housing portfolio. Because affordable housing properties are carefully underwritten to support a certain level of expenses and debt, these challenges pose real threats to the long-term health of these projects and the stability of the families who rely on them for safe and secure housing.

With both resources and policy actions, the state must more directly focus on preservation strategies to ensure we are keeping projects affordable in the long term.

- **\$32mm in funding to Modernize Supportive Housing Preservation.**
 - We join partners at the Supportive Housing Network of New York to urge \$32mm to bring underfunded NYS Supportive Housing Program (NYSSH) units up to funding levels necessary to stabilize them.

- **Help Nonprofit Affordable Housing Owners Access Insurance Captives.**
 - We support efforts as proposed by the Governor to assist nonprofits in the affordable and supportive housing space qualify for insurance captives. Barriers exist for smaller and less-resourced owners to qualify for existing captives, including up-front capital commitments, administrative costs associated with collecting loss run data, and certain property requirements such as security cameras. This funding source should be robust and flexible.

- **\$500K for Statewide Feasibility Study to Further Supportive Captive Growth.**
 - Recently launched captives to support the affordable housing industry are currently limited to New York City. For new captives to get off the ground, owners must produce actuarially-sound analyses of their risks and loss history. A pot of funding to allow groups around New York State to conduct these studies would encourage further captive creation and give more owners the opportunity to reduce costs.

Fair Housing

The rights of New Yorkers to be free of discrimination in their housing choices and to have the opportunity for upward mobility are paramount. Federal priorities in this area will continue to evolve and change. For New York's lawmakers, the commitment to fair housing must be steadfast.

- **Source of Income Proxy Discrimination (S. 1130 / A. 4120).**
 - While source of income discrimination has been illegal in New York State since 2019, many voucher holders still face barriers, including unfair income requirements that would be impossible for a voucher holder to meet. We support this legislation that prohibits this form of proxy discrimination based on income requirements imposed beyond the tenant portion of rent.

- **Disparate Impact Codification (S. 4067 / A. 4040).**
 - We support legislation to codify the disparate impact standard, which dictates that a practice can be deemed illegal by its discriminatory effect, even if it was not motivated by discriminatory intent. Codification in New York State law will enshrine this important standard.

➤ **\$7mm for HCR’s Fair Housing Testing, Education and Networking Program and Codification**

- We request that the budget allocate \$7mm for the Fair Housing Testing, Education and Networking program, which funds a network of nonprofit fair housing organizations to do systemic fair housing work in their communities across the state. This will bring funding up to prior levels when this work was an Enterprise pilot program and will allow the work of these groups to go deeper. We also support legislative efforts to codify the program into law.

Housing Supply

We applaud actions taken in last year’s session to encourage housing supply, as well as local efforts such as the City of Yes for Housing Opportunity in New York City. As decades of underbuilding in many areas of the state will take a significant effort to reverse, we encourage continued efforts to build on this momentum with additional policy decisions and resources.

➤ **Enact the Sustainable Affordable Housing and Sprawl Prevention Act to reform SEQR (S. 3492).**

- Enterprise supports this legislation, which streamlines SEQR environmental review for projects that build to sustainable standards, on previously developed land, and meet an affordable housing threshold.

The Governor’s announced efforts to allow certain projects of under 10,000 square feet to fall into the more streamlined Tier II SEQR category are also a welcome step, although to fully expedite more affordable housing projects around the state, the fuller impact of this legislation is recommended.

➤ **Double the State Low Income Housing Credit (SLIHC) Allocation.**

- We support the Executive Budget proposal to double the annual SLIHC allocation. SLIHC is an important tool in affordable housing finance statewide and is consistently a fully subscribed resource.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.