

Hello, my name is Bebhinn Francis and I am an organizer with the National Union of the Homeless. I work closely with the un-housed community of Albany and we are exhausted. We are exhausted by the system and the housing crisis in New York State. We are not alone in our exhaustion. Thousands of New Yorkers are suffering from the threat of eviction and homelessness.

I experienced homelessness for the second time from 2021 through 2024.

My 19-month crisis began when my marriage suddenly came to an end. In the blink of an eye, I went from having the support of my husband's income to only my own. I received Social Security Disability and I worked part-time, but I could not afford to secure and maintain housing on my own. I needed help. One hundred and forty thousand New Yorkers need help.

I immediately applied for public housing, and after the arduous application process, I was placed on the waiting list. The estimated wait is two years, or longer. I am still on that list.

For 19 months, 578 days, I looked in the mirror and watched my health decline. I became malnourished and my body stopped making white blood cells. I watched as I lost weight, and virtually faded away. Housing is health care, housing is a human right.

Living at or below the poverty line is like walking a tightwire. We try to maintain balance under extraordinary pressure. The Housing Access Voucher Program is the safety net New York State needs when we fall.

The Housing Access Voucher Program will uplift over 20 thousand people out of homelessness.

The Housing Access Voucher Program can prevent tens of thousands of non-payment evictions.

The Housing Access Voucher Program can subsidize low-income housing so it does not fall into disrepair.

HAVP is a common sense policy and one solution New York State wants and needs.