



127 West 127th St.
Suite 221
New York, NY 10027
www.africans.us

Testimony in Support of Increased Funding for Housing Access Voucher Program

2026 New York State Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Housing

Feb. 25, 2026

Please accept this written testimony on behalf of African Communities Together (ACT); a national nonprofit dedicated to fighting for civil rights, opportunity, and a better life for immigrants in the U.S. ACT empowers African immigrants to integrate socially, advance economically, and engage civically and in this effort, we advocate for equity, dignity and respect for all, which is why we request that the New York State Legislature prioritize housing needs in this year's budget and legislative sessions. In particular, we ask that legislators expand the Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP) to \$250 million and make the program permanent in the FY27 budget.

New York is in the midst of a severe housing crisis. In January 2025, a report by the New York State Comptroller found that there were 158,019 people experiencing homelessness across New York State, including more than 50,000 children.¹ It is not just unhoused New Yorkers who are experiencing housing instability; in 2025, there were a total of 192,156 eviction filings statewide.² A report from 2024 found that more than half (2.9 million households) of all renter households statewide are rent-burdened and 20 percent are severely rent burdened, paying 50 percent or more of their income on rent.³ Adding to this crisis, new immigrant arrivals in New York City (NYC) seeking safety have been subjected to a variety of hurdles in their efforts to become gainfully employed and obtain stable housing, which has

¹ Thomas DiNapoli "New Yorkers in Need: Homelessness in New York State" Economic and Policy Insights: January 2025. <https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/reports/pdf/new-yorkers-in-need-homelessness-nys.pdf>

² NYS Unified Court System "State Wide Eviction Information," 2025 <https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrjoiZGE3NzljYmItYTBMZC00OGI2LTliYTgtYzY5ZjI0NE2U0MWYxIiwidCI6IjM0NTZmZTkxLWUiZDEtNDA2ZC1iNWZLTUzNjRiZWwYUzYzMyJ9>

³ "New Yorkers in Need – The Housing Insecurity Crisis," *The Office of Budget and Policy Analysis, New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli*, February 2024, <https://www.osc.ny.gov/reports/new-yorkers-need-housing-insecurity-crisis>

resulted in increased shelter populations. Housing is a human right, regardless of status, and it is time we collectively act to ensure housing stability for all New Yorkers.

An expansion of HAVP will allow cities and towns across the state to stabilize approximately 10,000 households. They will be able to use these vouchers to help people experiencing homelessness find permanent homes or issue them to low-income New Yorkers at risk of becoming homeless. The program guarantees that participating households pay no more than 30 percent of their income toward rent. Although HAVP largely mirrors Section 8, it is more inclusive since it is available to people regardless of immigration status or criminal record. In addition to stabilizing individuals and families, a permanent HAVP program would provide financial stability to landlords, ensuring a steady stream of rental income from low-income tenants. Further, data from Win shows that, once fully implemented, HAVP could come with significant cost savings by offsetting shelter and other costs associated with eviction and homelessness.⁴

Research shows rental vouchers reduce homelessness and housing instability,⁵ improve outcomes for children,⁶ and promote beneficial outcomes for family well-being, including *halving* intimate partner violence.⁷ Federal Housing Choice Vouchers reduce the poverty rate for recipients by 43%⁸ and provide long-term benefits to households that previously experienced homelessness.⁹ State and local

⁴ Hannah Tager, Martin Gamboa, Chris Mann, “The Housing Access Voucher Program: Saving New York State \$200 Million and Preventing Homelessness for Tens of Thousands of New Yorkers Every Year” Win, <https://winnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/HAVP-Report.pdf>

⁵ Ingrid Ellen Gould, “What Do We Know About Housing Choice Vouchers?,” *The NYU Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy*, July 2018, https://furmancenter.org/files/fact-sheets/HousingChoiceVouchers_ige.pdf

⁶ <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/aer.20150572>

⁷ Douglas Rice, Major Study: Housing Vouchers Most Effective Tool to End Family Homelessness, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, July 2015, <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/major-study-housing-vouchers-most-effective-tool-to-end-family-homelessness#:~:text=Major%20Study:%20Housing%20Vouchers%20Most%20Effective%20Tool.to%20report%20incidents%20of%20domestic%20violence:%20and>

⁸ Sophie Collyer, et. Housing Vouchers and Tax Credits: Pairing the Proposal to Transform Section 8 with Expansions to the EITC and the Child Tax Credit Could Cut the National Poverty Rate by Half,” Center for Poverty and Social Policy, Columbia University Population Research Center, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5743308460b5e922a25a6dc7/t/5f7dd00e12dfe51e169a7e83/1602080783936/Housing-Vouchers-Proposal-Poverty-Impacts-CPSP-2020.pdf>

⁹ Family Options Study: 3-Year Impacts of Housing and Services Interventions for Homeless Families,” U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Policy Development and Research, <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/family-options-study-full-report.pdf>

rental assistance vouchers have a similarly stabilizing effect: in FY25, the number of families with children in New York City who exited shelter with subsidies – mostly the City’s local rental assistance voucher, CityFHEPS – increased by 40% compared to FY24. The number of subsidized exits was almost triple that of unsubsidized exits.¹⁰

Despite the wealth of evidence about the positive effects of rental assistance, there are not nearly enough federal and local vouchers to meet the need in New York. Only one in four eligible households receive Housing Choice Vouchers, and localities outside of NYC do not have their own local voucher programs, leaving households with little to no options to help them afford rent. Furthermore, attacks on the immigrant community on the federal level (ex: the recently proposed HUD rule that would prevent mixed status families from utilizing federal housing assistance), have made accessing housing programs even more difficult. For these reasons, ACT joins the Housing Access New York (HANY) coalition in urging the Legislature and Governor to expand HAVP to \$250 million and establish the program’s permanency in the FY27 budget.

Thank you for your consideration, and I hope you will join us in our fight for safe, dignified, affordable housing for all New Yorkers.

Sincerely,





Sosseh Prom

She/Her/Hers

National Housing Justice Director | africans.us

Cell: 202-834-3595 | Email: sosseh@africans.us

700 Pennsylvania Ave. SE | Washington, DC 20003

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¹⁰ Analysis of data from Mayor’s Management Report 2023, NYC.gov. Page 259-260,
https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2025/2025_mmr.pdf