



New York State Legislature
Joint Legislative Budget Hearing - Housing
Submitted by the New York Immigration Coalition
February 25, 2026

My name is Carlos Enrique Minaya Arnao, I am the Director of Healthy Communities at the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC). The NYIC is a coalition of more than 200 immigrant and refugee organizations advancing access to public services, inclusion, and justice. We unite immigrants, members, and allies to build power so all New Yorkers can thrive. We thank you, Chair Pretlow and Chair Krueger, for convening this important hearing.

In my capacity, I monitor, research, and advocate for equitable housing access for our immigrant communities. For years, we and other advocates have called for sustained investment to build the systems New York needs to protect the basic rights and well-being of all residents, regardless of immigration status, and to ensure that families and communities can thrive, lead, and remain rooted in the places they call home. Achieving this requires meaningful funding and legislative commitments that safeguard housing access and the infrastructure necessary to implement it.

In that context, the NYIC respectfully calls on the legislature to:

- Fully fund the Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP) to \$250 million in the FY27 budget;
- Transition HAVP from a pilot program to a permanent one; and
- Enable the expansion of housing programs, such as the CityFHEPS voucher program, to all New Yorkers regardless of immigration status by passing [S958/A1503](#).

Fully Fund HAVP and Transition HAVP to Permanent Status

As New York confronts a deepening housing and affordability crisis, and immigrant families face heightened vulnerability, the New York Immigration Coalition urges the State to allocate **\$250 million** to fully fund the Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP) and **establish it as a permanent program**.

The Housing Access Voucher Program is a state funded rental assistance program designed to assist households experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness in securing stable and safe housing. Unlike other programs, HAVP is unique because it is inclusive of anyone regardless of their immigration status or criminal record and allows participants to move anywhere within New York State. Modeled after Section 8, HAVP guarantees that participating households pay no more than 30 percent of their income toward rent.

In January 2025, the [New York State Comptroller](#) reported that 158,019 people were experiencing homelessness across our state, including more than 50,000 children. In the same year, there were a total of 192,156 eviction filings across New York. HAVP not only helps families and individuals transition out of homelessness, it provides a safety net to support



housing stability and prevent households from losing their homes in the first place. The NYIC is particularly invested in HAVP as we foresee coming changes from the federal government that target marginalized immigrant communities.

Expanding access to permanent, affordable housing through programs like HAVP is an effective and humane strategy to promote public health and economic stability. Research consistently shows that housing instability is associated with poorer physical and behavioral health outcomes, and with [higher mortality rates](#) from causes such as drug overdose and cardiac disease. Stable housing is a key protective factor that supports overall well-being. Housing instability also has significant consequences for children and families, with immigrant children and families often facing heightened vulnerability. An Urban Institute [analysis](#) of the impacts of unstable housing on childhood development highlights several negative health and developmental effects for children and families, including:

- Postponed medical care,
- Increased emergency room visits,
- The appearance and lasting presence of respiratory and other chronic conditions,
- Lower school attendance, and
- Slowed social-emotional development among children.

For survivors of domestic violence, often with children, flexible rental assistance like HAVP enables them to safely leave abusive situations. A [nationwide study](#) on the impact of voucher programs noted a 55% drop in reported domestic partner violence in families with vouchers. Ensuring access to HAVP strengthens safety, stability, and long-term well-being for some of New York's most vulnerable households.

Despite this evidence, there are not nearly enough vouchers in New York to meet the growing demand and number of unhoused people. Fully funding HAVP and establishing it as a permanent program would make lasting change and provide stability for our most vulnerable.

The \$250 million dollar investment in HAVP, split evenly between eviction prevention and providing stable housing for unhoused people, could save New York over \$400 million in avoided public costs associated with housing instability. Preventing homelessness reduces costly emergency room visits and charity care, lowers involvement of law enforcement, and reduces the costs to run emergency shelters. A [2024 report](#) by Women in Need (WIN)—the city's largest provider of family shelters and supportive housing—calculated a savings of over \$95 million on shelter costs after fully funding the program. Housing stability also strengthens local economies, as families are better able to work, pursue education, and invest in their communities.

Enable the Expansion of Housing Programs to All

The calls for **expanding housing programs to all** individuals in need, regardless of immigration status, through the passage of [S958/A1503](#). This legislation would empower cities with populations over 5 million to extend local housing vouchers—including CityFHEPS—to households that are currently ineligible due to immigration status.



State support for expanding housing programs, alongside HAVP, would generate long-term financial benefits for both the City and State, increase shelter capacity, lower homelessness rates, improve health outcomes for New Yorkers transitioning out of shelters or street homelessness, and provide stability for immigrant families. For example, New York City's CityFHEPS program is limited to households where at least one member has lawful status or citizenship, and vouchers are funded on a prorated basis. As a complement and not a substitute to HAVP, CityFHEPS is a proven tool for preventing homelessness and promoting housing stability, with all the associated downstream benefits.

Providing vouchers through programs like CityFHEPS is also cost-effective. The City spends about \$388 per diem to house migrants through both the Department of Homeless Services shelter system and humanitarian emergency relief and response centers, compared with \$72 per night for CityFHEPS vouchers for families, according to a [2023 report](#) by Women In Need (WIN).

The NYIC recognizes the critical role that supportive housing programs, such as HAVP and CityFHEPS, have in protecting the most vulnerable New Yorkers, including immigrant children and families. Housing stability makes families better able to work, children more able to pursue education, and is a crucial investment in our communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Submitted by:

Carlos Enrique Minaya Arnao, MPH
Director, Healthy Communities
New York Immigration Coalition