



## **Joint Legislative Public Hearing on Housing – Testimony in Support of Expanding and Making Permanent the Housing Access Voucher Program**

February 25, 2026

My name is Natasha Lifton, Managing Director of External Affairs and Special Projects at Trinity Church in New York City. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for today's hearing. I urge the Legislature and Governor to expand the Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP) to a total of \$250 million and make the program permanent in the FY27 New York State budget.

Trinity Church is an Episcopal Church in Lower Manhattan with a congregation of more than 1,600 parishioners who come from all five boroughs and form an ethnically, racially, and economically diverse congregation. In addition to our ministry, we carry out the mission of faith and social justice through direct services, grantmaking, and advocacy.

Trinity has a long history of advancing social justice in alignment with our belief that every person is created in the image of God and has dignity and value. Removing barriers to and increasing the supply of affordable and supportive housing is a major priority for Trinity. In 2025, we provided more than \$13 million in grants and program related investments to support affordable housing development and address homelessness. In addition, Trinity's Mission Real Estate Development program provides funding and investments for feasibility studies and construction projects that generate income for ministry, many of which are affordable housing development projects locally, nationally, and internationally.

In this context and as faith leaders and fellow New Yorkers, Trinity Church is deeply concerned about the acute lack of affordable housing and its impact on our most vulnerable. 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.<sup>i</sup> It is not just unhoused New Yorkers who are experiencing housing instability; in 2025, there were a total of 192,156 eviction filings Statewide.<sup>ii</sup> 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.<sup>iii</sup>

An expansion of HAVP will allow cities and towns across the state to address this critical need. It would stabilize approximately 10,000 households, as well as help people experiencing homelessness find permanent homes. 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 because 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 building owners, ensuring a steady stream of rental income from low-income tenants. Further, data shows that, once fully implemented, HAVP could come with significant cost savings by offsetting shelter and other costs associated with eviction and homelessness.<sup>iv</sup>



In addition, research shows rental vouchers reduce homelessness and housing instability,<sup>v</sup> improve outcomes for children,<sup>vi</sup> and promote beneficial outcomes for family well-being, including cutting rates of intimate partner violence in half.<sup>vii</sup> Federal Housing Choice Vouchers reduce the poverty rate for recipients by 43%<sup>viii</sup> and provide long-term benefits to households that previously experienced homelessness.<sup>ix</sup> State and local 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.<sup>x</sup>

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 New York City do not have their own local voucher programs, leaving households with little to no options to help them afford rent.

For these reasons, Trinity Church joins the Housing Access New York coalition in urging the Legislature and Governor to expand HAVP to \$250 million and ensure sustained funding in the FY27 budget.

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<sup>i</sup> 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>

<sup>ii</sup> NYS Unified Court System “*State Wide Eviction Information*,” 2025 <https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoizGE3NzljYmItYTBMZC00OGI2LTliYTgtYzY5ZjI0N2U0MWYxliwidCI6IjM0NTZmZTk1LWNiZDEtNDA2ZC1iINWEzLTUzNjRiZWMwYTgzMyJ9>

<sup>iii</sup> “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>

<sup>iv</sup> 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>

<sup>v</sup> 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](https://furmancenter.org/files/fact-sheets/HousingChoiceVouchers_ige.pdf)

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

<sup>vii</sup> 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>

<sup>viii</sup> 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>



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<sup>x</sup> 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>

<sup>x</sup> 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](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2025/2025_mmr.pdf)