



Something to Celebrate in the New State Budget

New Yorkers can celebrate the opportunity for a tool to move people experiencing homelessness from shelters to stable housing because of the last-second success of advocates and policy makers in removing language from the New York State budget that prohibited it.

Monday, as state legislators and Governor Cuomo enacted the new state budget they removed language prohibiting any city in New York of over 5 million (that's only New York City; the second largest city, Buffalo, has a 260,000 population) from using state money to fund a rental subsidy program for homeless people. That language prohibiting state and federal funding from the old city Advantage program in 2011 has remained in each budget since then.

Just 5 days before this year's March 31st deadline the prohibitive language was still firmly in place. There were media stories reporting policy makers were saying it was too late in the process to change it.

But client leaders, advocates and public officials championing the cause stepped up efforts in the final hours of budget negotiations and overcame long odds to remove the prohibitive language. That clears the way for a subsidy program absolutely critical to fighting and ending modern day homelessness.

On Wednesday, March 26, City Council held a public hearing on the issue. Care for the Homeless, along with other advocates and people experiencing homelessness, testified about the need for the program. CFH's testified a long term, flexible and effective rental subsidy targeted to assist people in moving from shelter to stable housing would produce far better outcomes for the families and individuals involved, for every community in the city and would save substantial tax dollars.

Later that day a unanimous City Council passed a resolution authored by Councilman Ruben Wills and moved by General Welfare Chair Stephen Levin urging the change. *Continued on page 2.*



Care for the Homeless Executive Director Bobby Watts testifies.

Shelter Census Hits New High as Housing Hits New Low

Even as we celebrate the opportunity to more effectively fight homelessness, we recognize just how enormous NYC's homelessness crisis has become. More than 111,000 New Yorkers slept in city homeless shelters in New York City at some point in 2013. In January the City Department of Homeless Services shelters set new record highs as the lack of tools to move homeless families and individuals to stable housing continued to force more people into shelters.

The Coalition for the Homeless State of Homelessness 2014 report released in March documented these new records:

- City DHS shelters averaged a record high daily census of 53,615 people
- That included a horrendous 22,712 children, another record high
- In 2013, average duration of stay in shelter for homeless families increased to 14.5 months

The recent increase in city shelter population has been driven primarily by homeless families. *Continued on page 2.*

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Shelter Census continued ...

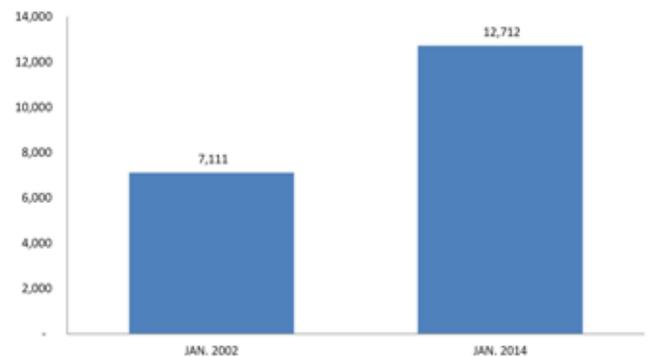
In 2002, DHS reported an average of 7,111 families in city shelters. That increased in January, 2013, to 12,712 families – an increase of over 78% in 11 years.

Last month New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli also released his Housing Affordability in New York State report, documenting falling median wages in New York and rising housing costs have pushed many New Yorkers over the housing crisis edge. Based on HUD's "affordability index" (households shouldn't spend more than 30% of gross income on housing), 3 million New York households are in housing they can't afford. HUD defines spending 50% or more of gross income on housing as being "severely housing cost burdened" – and 1.5 million New Yorkers are in that category.

DiNapoli reports things are even worse in New York City, where most households are housing cost burdened using the HUD index. The percentage of households spending more than 30% of gross income on housing, by city borough, are: Bronx: 57.6%; Queens: 53.7%; Brooklyn: 52.5%; Staten Island: 48.8%; and Manhattan: 44.4%. Worse still, those percentages are increasing.

Finally, in March the City Independent Budget Office (IBO) released a study on how federal sequestration cuts have impacted New York City. While new sequestration cuts have been at least temporarily avoided, the previous cuts are still hurting people in need. In one example, the city had to virtually eliminate all new Section 8 housing vouchers this year due to previous sequestration cuts.

The Number of Homeless Families in NYC Increased 78% in 11 Years.



In past cutbacks the city was able to at least replace "old" vouchers with new vouchers as they were returned to the system. In the current fiscal year just maintaining vouchers for households in the program required spending down all reserve funds and not issuing new vouchers to replace expiring ones. The IBO reports the city had 130,129 Section 8 vouchers in use in the first 3 months of fiscal 2013, but only 127,901 in the first 3 months of fiscal 2014. That means 2,228 fewer households were receiving voucher assistance, even as the housing problem grew worse and housing less affordable in the city.

Something to Celebrate continued ...

A united de Blasio administration, City Council and advocacy community carried the message to Albany. In that effort CFH client leaders and staff participated in a phone call campaign to legislative leaders asking for the change. Happily, in the final contentious hours of budget negotiations the prohibitive language was removed.

CFH's Agenda to End Homelessness is based on the idea that policy choices created modern day homelessness and better policy can help end homelessness as we know it. In New York City, eliminating the previous rental subsidy used to transition people from shelters to stable housing caused an enormous increase in homelessness. Creating a working rental subsidy is a critical part of the better policy that can end homelessness in New York City.

This success isn't an end, though. It's a beginning. If you want to join our grass roots campaign to build the better policies that can end modern day homelessness as we know it in New York, sign on by sending your e-mail and contact information to policy@cfhnyc.org. We'll sign you up for this monthly Policy Matters newsletter, too!

Join Care for the Homeless at NYC AIDS Walk on May 18

For almost a decade Care for the Homeless has taken part in the NYC AIDS Walk, raising public awareness, supporting the cause and raising funds for the fight against HIV and AIDS. In 2014 the CFH Team, led by client leaders from our two consumer boards, are once again participating. About 2 dozen CFH clients and staff are already on board.

The walk is on Sunday, May 18, in Central Park. Opening Ceremonies kick off at 9:15, with the walk starting about 10 a.m. It's a 6.2 mile walking course. We take a fairly leisurely pace (though each walker can set their own pace), so it's a 2.5 hour walk if you go the distance, but team members are invited to participate for as much or as little of the event as they are comfortable with. Last year we had team members who joined us just for the kickoff, which was great too!

It's a festive, fun atmosphere featuring music, celebrities, lots of support and good will. Last year we walked in terrible rain, but we've been assured it'll be a beautiful day for a celebration and a walk this May 18th.

You're invited to join the Care for the Homeless AIDS Walk team by contacting us at policy@cfhnyc.org, or you can sign up with our team at the [AIDSWalk New York](http://AIDSWalkNewYork.com) website.