

**Testimony of Steven Banks, Commissioner  
New York City Department of Social Services**

**Before the New York City Council General Welfare Committee  
Oversight: Post-90 Day Review  
April 20, 2017**

Good morning Chairperson Levin and members of the General Welfare Committee. Thank you for inviting me to appear before you today to discuss the status of the 46 reforms adopted by the Mayor last year following the 90-day comprehensive operational review of homeless services. My name is Steven Banks and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services, overseeing the Human Resources Administration and the Department of Homeless Services.

Over the past three years, this Administration has implemented and expanded many key initiatives in order to prevent and alleviate homelessness, including reinstating rental assistance programs and other permanent housing initiatives that have enabled 55,480 individuals in 20,183 households to avert entry into or move out of shelter.

During this same time period the Administration moved forward with the most aggressive affordable housing plan in decades. To date, under the *Housing New York Plan*, the City has financed 62,506 affordable homes, including enough affordable housing to serve more than 160,000 low-income New Yorkers.

This coincides with the historic tenfold increased investment of \$62 million in civil legal services; we have seen a 24% decline in evictions over the past three years, resulting in more than 40,000 New Yorkers being able to stay in their homes in 2015 and 2016. And the increased payment of rent arrears has enabled more than 161,000 households to keep a roof over their heads.

As you know, we did not wait until the completion of the 90-day review to begin to implement necessary reforms. For example, during the review period from December 2015 – April 2016 we took the following actions:

- Committed to the largest municipal program to build and expand supportive housing by funding 15,000 new units of supportive housing over the next 15 years, with the first 550 scatter-site units coming online this year.
- Provided additional Tier II and Emergency beds for the Domestic Violence shelter system, doubling the number of Domestic Violence survivor beds with the first increase since 2010. This includes 300 emergency beds and 400 Tier II units. To date, 150 of the emergency beds have already been brought online with an additional 67 in the pipeline pending State approval, plus an additional 83 beds beginning the approval process.
- Expanded the number of dedicated youth beds for runaway and homeless youth, operated by the Department of Youth and Community Development.
- And we implemented a plan to double the number of drop-in centers to provide services to help bring homeless individuals off the streets.

These initiatives and investments over the past several years and during the review period were necessary initiatives to stabilize the system and break the trajectory of homelessness that has built up over several decades, increasing 115% since 1994.

There were also specific reforms we undertook during the review period to directly address the conditions that clients were experiencing while residing in shelter. These specific reforms include:

- Creating the shelter repair scorecard to track shelter conditions.
- Implementing an enhanced shelter repair program.
- Increasing security at all commercial hotels that house homeless families and individuals.
- Providing 24/7 security coverage at mental health shelters.
- Overhauling reporting on critical incidents.
- Restoring a program for domestic violence services at shelters that was eliminated in 2010.
- Initiating a New York City Police Department (NYPD) shelter security review and retraining of Department of Homeless Services (DHS) Peace Officers.
- Announcing and beginning to implement a plan to end the 17-year-old cluster shelter program and the use of commercial hotels.

The comprehensive review process itself was guided by three principles: enhancing quality services for clients, efficient use of City resources, and cost effectiveness by avoiding duplication. The review of the 20-year old system included participation from a variety of stakeholders: individuals and families directly impacted, managers, staff and union leadership

at DHS, HRA and other City agencies, providers, homeless advocacy organizations, national experts and researchers, former DHS Commissioners, and elected officials.

The 46 reforms developed as a result of the review build on the significant initiatives from this Administration to prevent and alleviate homelessness, including comprehensive rental assistance programs, historic funding allocated for civil legal services for tenant anti-harassment and anti-eviction programs, and a commitment to the preservation and creation of 200,000 units of affordable housing. The 46 reforms can be categorized under four broad categories: prevention, addressing street homelessness, sheltering, and rehousing.

### **Management Reforms**

As a result of the review and building on reforms announced during the 90-day period, the City has implemented an integrated management structure with both HRA and DHS reporting to a single Commissioner of Social Services. This allows the two agencies to provide more seamless and effective client services. We are leveraging the shared services functions across the two agencies, resulting in better day-to-day management and building a unified mission across agencies. Prevention and rehousing were moved out of DHS operations and integrated within current HRA operations.

Under this integrated management structure, under DSS, the following are now shared services across both HRA and DHS: Counsel and Contracts, IT, Program Accountability and Audits, Communications and External Affairs, Human Resources, Infoline, Finance, Performance Management, Research, and Policy and Planning as well as IDNYC.

The DSS Leadership team consists of the General Counsel and the Chief Contracting Officer; the Chief Program Planning and Financial Management Officer including Finance, Evaluation and Research and Planning, and Performance Management; the Chief External Affairs Officer including Community Engagement and Access, Constituent Services, Office of Advocacy, and Outreach, Communications, Marketing and Legislative Affairs, Public Private Partnerships, and Citywide Health Insurance Access; the Chief Operating Officer including Staff Resources, Management Information Systems, general Support Services, Police Operations and Business Process Innovation; and the Chief Program Accountability Officer including Investigation, Revenue and Enforcement Administration, and Audit and Quality Assurance Services.

As a result of the reforms, there were administrative and programmatic savings in the budget of \$38 million from eliminating duplicative operations and streamlining management.

## Prevention

We implemented an aggressive prevention-first strategy reinstating tools the City had walked away from before this Administration and creating new rental assistance programs to increase the number of families and individuals leaving shelters. Preventing homelessness before it occurs is critical to reducing the number of families and individuals living in shelter, and is a cost-effective and common sense solution to address homelessness.

These “prevention first” reforms refocus the system to place greater emphasis on the role of prevention services, expanding the tools and resources available to those in need, and proactively identifying and serving those who are most at-risk of becoming homeless.

**1. Move Homebase program management from DHS to HRA:** The management of the Homebase program moved to HRA, which already runs a number of homeless prevention programs and services. Integrating all prevention services under one agency will reduce inefficiencies and allow for more seamless and effective client services. The integration was completed in January 2017.

**2. Expand Homebase staffing and services:** HRA staff at Homebase offices will provide expanded on-site processing and triage for HRA benefits, including public assistance and rental assistance. Homebase not-for-profit staff will also expand their case management services to include landlord and family mediation, educational advancement, employment, and financial literacy services. A Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued in February with contract awards to be announced in the coming weeks and the expanded services in place by this summer.

Since 2014, we expanded the Homebase program to 24 locations across the five boroughs and more than doubled the program’s funding. As a result of these increases Homebase reached 25,632 households in FY16, a 115% increase of households served compared to FY14.

**3. Expand the scope of Homebase as the first point of entry for those at risk of homelessness:** The City developed an intake model that builds on Homebase to focus greater attention on the role of communities in supporting families at risk of becoming homeless. Families seeking homeless prevention or shelter services will be able to obtain these services within their borough, rather than through the City’s centralized intake center in the Bronx. A Staten Island pilot launched in March 2017 for Staten Island families at risk of homelessness.

**4. Use data analytics to proactively target prevention services for at-risk clients:** HRA will use client data collected by the agencies to proactively identify and target prevention services for New Yorkers who are most at risk of becoming homeless, such as families who are at risk of having their public assistance case closed administratively or reapplying for shelter.

Eligibility research for families reapplying for shelter at the PATH intake office was revamped in April 2016 and in December 2016; this newly combined data was used to develop new strategies for intervention. These strategies were developed from our Neighborhood Homelessness Prevention Outreach (NHPO) Phase I – in which staff made calls and home visits to offer prevention services to a cohort of about 2,000 clients identified as high risk of becoming homeless.

Between October and December 2016, mailings were sent to 8,881 cash assistance clients with a known history of homelessness, encouraging them to call the NHPO hotline for assistance with housing related issues. To test the efficacy of behaviorally-informed communications, half of the target group received the mailer in a traditional agency format and half received a mailer designed in collaboration with ideas42, an organization that uses behavioral science to design scalable solutions to some of society's most difficult problems. The evaluation, which will occur this summer, will assess call-in rates, referral rates, service receipt, and, ultimately, shelter applications.

The research of PATH re-applications will inform development of additional interventions.

**5. Target outreach to doubled-up families with school-aged children:** HRA will work with the Department of Education (DOE) to identify and proactively target prevention services for students of families living in doubled-up situations who are reported as homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act. Outreach was conducted in June 2016 to doubled-up families with school-aged children who were offered homelessness prevention services. Planning is under way to implement this outreach annually beginning in June 2017, prior to the end of school when typically applications for family shelter increase.

**6. Deploy additional HRA prevention staff to single adult and adult family intake sites:** In May 2016, an intervention process was established at the Borden Shelter for veterans and at HRA's Veterans Services unit to help veterans avoid entering shelter. As of April 2017, data is being analyzed to identify other populations that would benefit most from additional prevention services at intake. A similar initiative is being implemented this month for adult families.

**7. Target services and rental assistance for youth in DYCD shelters:** Rental assistance programs will be expanded to include youth living in DYCD youth shelters at risk of entering DHS shelters. A workgroup between DHS and DYCD was formed to facilitate expansion of rental assistance programs. This expansion will occur with the streamlining of the City's rental assistance programs, which is expected to be finalized in the summer of 2017 following the recent FEPS settlement in The Legal Aid Society's litigation against the State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance.

**8. Target services and rental assistance for clients with mental health needs cycling between jail and homelessness:** We are currently finalizing plans for the implementation of a 24-hour hotline to support at-risk clients, including clients being discharged from NYC Health and Hospitals. The City has also recently announced the provision of [97 units of supportive housing](#) targeted for such clients.

**9. Create City/State Task Forces to increase homelessness prevention:** In connection with the recent FEPS settlement, the State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance and DSS worked together to enhance the rental assistance tools to prevent homelessness, including increasing the level of rental assistance provided through the State FEPS program and expanding assistance for survivors of domestic violence.

### **Addressing Street Homelessness**

Implemented in March 2016, HOME-STAT is the nation's most comprehensive street outreach program that was built from our street homelessness prevention and response initiatives. Additionally, we enhanced funding for more safe haven beds, additional drop in centers, and the creation of 15,000 supportive housing units to ensure that those living on the streets have opportunities to come inside and connect to the services and supports they need.

**10. Fully launch HOME-STAT to address street homelessness:** HOME-STAT was fully launched by April 2016.

In 2016, 690 individuals came off of the street and remained off of the street as a result of the work of HOME-STAT.

**11. Enhance tools for outreach teams to bring people in from the streets:** The City will increase safe haven, faith-based and stabilization beds, increase the number of drop in centers, and develop 15,000 units of supportive housing to provide essential tools to address street homelessness.

DHS is adding safe haven, faith-based and stabilization for homeless individuals and funding to open drop in centers in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens was awarded at the end of 2016. These locations are community-based programs that are located in close proximity to where our clients are. These programs are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide homeless individuals access to services such as meals, showers, and clothing. They can also provide case management services. The new Queens drop in center at 100-32 Atlantic Avenue opened yesterday, the Manhattan drop in center at 14<sup>th</sup> Street and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue will open before the end of the year, and the Brooklyn drop in center is in the development stage.

Safe Havens and stabilization beds are flexible transitional housing options exclusively for street homeless New Yorkers. They have lower thresholds for entry than a traditional shelter and are a key tool in building trust and relationships with street homeless clients, who are some of the most difficult to transition to permanent housing. The Stabilization beds typically provide a short-term spot for street homeless individuals prior to outreach workers moving them to a Safe Haven. The City has already opened 284 additional Safe Haven or Stabilization beds and plans to open at least 220 more Safe Haven beds in 2017.

The Administration's Supportive Housing Task Force, co-chaired by DSS and the Department of Housing Preservation and Development and comprised of providers and other experts, issued comprehensive recommendations last year for the implementation of the Administration's unprecedented commitment to provide 15,000 units of supportive housing. A supportive housing residence for 108 households opened in June 2016; ground was broken in August 2016 on the construction site of Melrose Commons Supportive Housing, which will accommodate 58 homeless adults in the Bronx. In December 2016, HRA awarded contracts for 550 units of scatter site supportive housing that will open this year. Additional supportive housing is being procured through pending RFPs.

### **Sheltering**

New York City experienced an exponential increase in the shelter population over the past two decades. However, we are committed to providing decent living conditions and high-quality social services to every family and individual seeking in shelter. These reforms address immediate concerns around shelter security and building conditions and include long-term strategies for sustaining these reforms into the future. These reforms also address pressing social service needs, targeting services to specific high-risk populations and giving clients opportunities to enhance their income-building capacity by developing a career pathway while in shelter.

#### **12. Increase safety in shelters through an NYPD management review and retraining program:**

In March 2016, NYPD began retraining all DHS security staff and sent an NYPD management team to the Agency to develop an action plan for upgraded security and a related retraining curriculum at all shelter facilities. In January 2017, NYPD began to oversee security services in the DHS shelter system. The Administration has doubled the 2013 investment in DHS security, with a total annual security spending of \$217 million for fiscal year 2017.

**13. Enhanced domestic violence services in DHS shelters:** As of December 2016, trained staff from HRA go to designated Tier II shelters to provide access to domestic violence services. Existing social services staff in Tier II shelters participate in enhanced training to provide them with the tools to identify and refer families and individuals to the HRA NoVA team, a NYC Family

Justice Center, or other community-based domestic violence providers. By September 2016, DHS employees and contracted staff system-wide had undergone intimate partner violence training. Additional NoVa trainings are scheduled in April 2017.

**14. Implement a more extensive reporting system for critical incidents that occur in shelters:**

To ensure that problems are identified, violence is now defined much more broadly to include wide-ranging definitions of domestic violence, assault, and both child abuse and neglect. In October 2016, the new reporting categories were finalized. A plan was sent to OTDA for confirmation and DHS is awaiting a response in order to proceed. Staff training and implementation is planned for May 2017.

**15. Expand Shelter Repair Squad 2.0 Operations:** The inspection process has been enhanced and inspections are being conducted twice a year at all sites used to house homeless people. The Shelter Report Card is produced monthly to hold the City and providers publicly accountable, and it has been available online for every month since December 2015. To reduce the initial backlog, a report called the Building Compliance Unit Daily Update was developed to monitor the status of all activities to address violations. Shelter providers have also been engaged in a work group to discuss the best means of collaborating to improve shelter conditions.

In 2016, the City and nonprofit shelter providers cleared nearly 14,000 violations in non-cluster shelters. City agencies also conducted nearly 13,000 inspections—a 50 percent increase from 2015—and the number of outstanding violations in traditional shelters dropped by 83 percent in 2016.

**16. Increase coordination among inspectors:** By September 2016, the City had coordinated all City Agencies with inspection responsibilities so that there are now semi-annual multi-agency inspections. Coordination with OTDA and with the Coalition for the Homeless on Callahan inspections was completed as of January 2017.

**17. Phasing out the use of cluster shelters:** At the high point, there were 3,658 cluster units in this 17-year program. As part of the phase out, we have already stopped using more than 750 units, and we are continuing to identify units that we will stop using. In May 2016, the DHS open-ended Request for Proposals for new shelters was revised to include a model with both transitional and permanent housing. The City is also working with contracted providers to close out or convert cluster units to permanent housing. And last month DSS leadership briefed the Bronx Council delegation on our progress, and we look forward to more opportunities to speak directly with members and answer questions regarding the phase out.

**18. Assessing the potential conversion of existing shelters to permanent housing:** Where feasible, the City will partially convert current shelter sites into permanent housing using new

shelter models like Gateway Housing and Homestretch, which include affordable permanent housing, shelter units, and community space at the same location. Potential conversion sites are currently being assessed.

**19. Phasing out use of commercial hotels:** As the cluster takedown, the shelter conversion process, and the enhanced shelter move-out efforts proceed, the City will prioritize ending reliance on renting blocks of rooms in commercial hotels as shelter. The *Turning the Tide* plan set forth the roadmap to get out of 360 cluster and commercial hotel sites and replace them with a smaller number of 90 high quality borough-based shelters. The first five replacement shelters were announced in February and three are already open and operating.

**20. Implement the domestic violence shelter expansion:** In FY16, HRA conducted an emergency procurement for emergency shelter beds and Tier II units; and 150 emergency beds were opened. The second phase of contracting and opening the remaining 150 emergency beds this year is underway. One contract for 52 Tier II units was awarded in April 2017 and these units are expected to open in the summer of 2017; additional Tier II contracts are expected to begin to be awarded by September 2017.

**21. Implementing a capital repair program:** As of January 2017, the City has implemented a large scale, new needs, repair program for city-owned, capitally eligible shelter sites. A new needs process for provider owned, non-capitally eligible sites has also been implemented to provide funding for repairs in these buildings.

**22. Rationalizing shelter provider rates:** DSS, DHS, and HRA are evaluating shelter provider rates to ensure they are sufficient to fund maintenance and services. Funding was added in the Executive 17 budget. Focus groups were conducted with providers and the leadership of Homeless Services United as part of the process to develop model shelter budgets. Development of a rate template and parameters for inclusion in the Open-Ended RFP is being developed, and contract adjustments will be implemented during the coming fiscal year.

The Department also committed to addressing the contract registration backlog that built up over a number of years. Just over a year ago, when DSS began to reform the contract process there were outstanding contract issues dating back to FY14 and FY15. We have resolved those and we are completing the process of 947 contract transactions for FY16, FY17, and the associated amendments. Currently, 99 percent of FY16 and 96 percent of FY17 contracts are registered. The small number of unregistered contracts—three for FY16 and thirteen for FY17—consist of contracts with pending outstanding items from nine providers, three that are pending with the Comptroller for registration, and thirteen that are being prepared by DSS for submission to the Comptroller shortly. As of April 18, 87 percent of the FY16 and FY17 contract amendments were registered with seven pending submission of items by providers, sixteen

pending with the Comptroller for registration, and seventeen that are being prepared by DSS staff for submission to the Comptroller shortly. This data does not include amendments connected to new needs submitted to DHS after March 1 or the current COLA, as those actions are still in process in the normal course of business. For FY18, contracts are already in process so that they can be in place at the beginning of the fiscal year for the first time in years.

**23. Address ADA compliance in shelters:** The City will hire a consultant to evaluate ADA accessibility in the DHS shelter system. A consultant firm has been identified to conduct surveys of selected shelters and assist in the development of compliance plans. We are now proceeding to take the necessary steps to bring the firm on board. We are also concluding settlement of the *Butler* litigation to address long-standing accessibility issues.

**24. Expanding the scope of HRA's ADA coordinator to cover the shelter system:** The DSS Executive Director of Disability Affairs added a Director of Disability Affairs for Homeless Services (ADA Coordinator) to her team in February 2017. The Disability Affairs Unit has been assessing all aspects of access in the shelter system, and, since the fall of 2016, has been identified as the contact on the DHS website regarding disability discrimination complaints and questions regarding access. The Disability Affairs Unit is working with DHS teams and responsible DSS departments to assess and revise the Reasonable Accommodation Process for DHS. The Unit is providing technical assistance and support to DHS staff regarding serving people with disabilities; identifying areas where training is necessary; and working directly with advocates and people with disabilities on issues that arise regarding access within the shelter system.

**25. Promote career pathways for shelter residents:** The City will implement new programs to help shelter residents move forward on a career pathway towards self-sufficiency.

Shelter providers submitted proposals for career pathway training to DHS for approval, and shelters have been provided additional funding to run enhanced programming in employment, literacy, and wellness. City-operated single adult and adult family shelters have also enhanced their vocational and employment training.

Additionally, we are finalizing a program model to offer shelter residents training and employment in the landscaping field as part of the routine maintenance of the City's shelters. Contracting for landscaping training programs is planned to begin in October 2017.

Traditional literacy classes, including math, reading, and writing classes designed and taught by the Department of Education (DOE), are slated to begin in July 2017. DHS is partnering with CUNY to provide financial literacy services to shelter clients and the City will implement additional training and employment programs at select shelters in 2017.

**26. Targeting services for emerging new trends in the single adult population (persons 50 or older and 18 to 24):** In June 2016, the concept paper for 10,000 units of affordable senior housing was released and we expect to release a Request for Proposals this spring. In February of this year, in partnership with Councilman Torres, we opened an 81-bed shelter in the Bronx for LGBTQ young homeless adults (ages 21-30). And a shelter for seniors (age 62 and older) has been developed in Crown Heights for senior men from Brooklyn.

Additionally, in early 2017, HRA released a congregate and scatter site supportive housing concept paper targeting young adults, and the RFP for congregate supportive housing for young adults was released in April. An open ended RFP that includes scatter sites for single young adults is expected to be released within the month. Additional research is being done on the RFP for scatter site housing for young adult families following the review of responses to the concept paper.

A number of initiatives are underway to better serve youth in partnership with DYCD as part of these reforms, namely reforms 7 and 30.

**27. Targeting services for families to move away from a one size fits all approach:** We are working to develop initiatives that focus on the varying needs of homeless families. We are working with providers to develop shelter models in which placements may be differentiated based on the family's readiness to be rapidly rehoused; families who are assessed to likely have a shorter stay in shelter may be placed in different programs than families with higher needs and a likely longer stay.

So far, three initiatives are under way:

- improve DHS access to HRA documents to reduce the need for clients to bring documents that they have already provided to HRA;
- improve coordination with NoVA at family intake (with implementation expected by June 2017); and
- improve information on shelters available to staff at PATH and provided to clients (with implementation expected by April 2017).

**28. Eliminate the requirement for school-age children to be present at PATH for multiple appointments:** By the end of 2016, this requirement was eliminated for families who reapply within 30 days at PATH. A second phase eliminating this requirement for families reunifying with children in foster care was launched in March. An evaluation of these programs will occur during the summer.

**29. Align access procedures for adult families with procedures for families with children:** The City will modify the intake process and improve capacity planning to avoid long waits and/or

transporting clients in the middle of the night as a result of the delay in identifying available shelter placements. This month, we are dedicating additional shelter space to meet the needs of adult families and to enhance intake services for such families.

**30. Streamline access to DYCD shelter for homeless youth:** Liaison staff were identified for DHS intake centers, and fact sheets for distribution to staff and homeless youth have been developed. The first staff training session occurred in January and the second follow up training will take place this month.

**31. Implement tripling of DYCD shelter capacity for Runaway and Homeless Youth:** The City has opened 205 Runaway and Homeless Youth beds since 2014, and 295 additional beds are funded and planned to open by 2019. This will bring the total system capacity from 253 when Mayor de Blasio took office to 753 by FY19.

**32. Provide increased notice prior to non-emergency transfers:** In non-emergency situations, clients will be given more notice that they are being transferred to another shelter. DHS program areas are finalizing an updated procedure for this policy.

**33. Increasing transportation resources to reduce placement waiting time.** Currently, an analysis of data to determine new transportation models and needs is under way.

**34. Deploy social workers to accompany families found ineligible who are returning to a community resource to provide on-the-spot assistance:** Social workers are currently being brought on board. Social workers will follow up with families during the conditional status, and contact primary tenants to offer such on the spot assistance.

**35. Expand the shelter conditions complaint process through HRA's Infoline:** The 24/7 Shelter Hotline launched in February 2016 and takes complaints from shelter residents as well as the public on shelter services and conditions. We completed this expansion in December 2016.

**36. Communicate more information to clients through flyers, posters and other media:** We recognize that better information for clients will enhance access to services, including employment and housing assistance. In March 2017, flyers and posters were provided to shelter sites for distribution and posting. We continue ongoing work to ensure flyers and posters are updated and replenished regularly as appropriate.

## **Rehousing**

Finding safe and affordable housing is essential to addressing homelessness. Coordinating rehousing resources in the City under one management structure, making the rental assistance programs easier to navigate, enhancing aftercare services, and enforcing housing discrimination laws will improve shelter move-outs and housing stability.

**37. Move Rehousing program management from DHS to HRA:** DSS, DHS, and HRA are developing a more coordinated program structure to promote move-outs, leveraging the expertise of each Agency. The DHS Supportive Housing Unit is on track to transfer to HRA in May 2017.

**38. Streamline the HPD housing placement process:** The City will establish a streamlined process to connect homeless clients to HPD-financed units that are available and appropriate for their needs. Planning is under way to identify and assist shelter residents who are eligible to apply for HPD lotteries for affordable housing.

**39. Continue to utilize NYCHA placements to address homelessness:** We have continued to place 1,500 DHS families and 300 survivors of domestic violence in HRA or DHS shelters last year and this year.

**40. Consolidate and streamline the LINC, SEPS and CityFEPS rental assistance programs:** The City will consolidate and streamline the operations of its rental assistance programs to enhance shelter move-outs. The streamlining plan is expected to be finalized this summer, now that the FEPS lawsuit has been settled.

As we reported last month, 20,183 households moved out or avoided shelter using rental assistance and our rehousing programs. As of the February 26, 2017 DHS shelter census, there are 7,315 cases with active LINC certifications. This number captures both families and individuals. As of the Jan Plan for FY17, the total budget for the LINC program is \$111.9 million gross and \$90.4 million CTL.

**41. Increase enforcement of source of income discrimination law:** The City will train and dedicate HRA staff to conduct testing to identify potential discriminatory practices and take enforcement action to supplement the efforts of the City Human Rights Commission. We reported previously that we had been involved with 35 cases, including cases that we worked on with CCHR over the past year, most of which have resulted in a favorable outcome for the client. DSS has distributed a Source of Income Discrimination Informational flyer with a phone number to contact, and New Yorkers can also call 311. Both HRA's Infoline Central Complaint Unit number and 311 are advertised on the flyer.

**42. Implement a more effective aftercare program:** Using the critical time intervention as a model, the City will enhance aftercare services for rehoused clients. In October 2016, a concept paper was released; and a Request for Proposal for enhanced community supports for persons exiting shelter with subsidies was released in February. The new services are expected to be in place in this summer. In the interim, current Homebase providers are providing this assistance.

**43. Provide assistance to obtain federal disability benefits:** Earlier this year the City dedicated services to focus on enrolling shelter residents on SSI/SSD to increase income and promote rehousing. This year, SSI/SSD enrollment assistance is planned for clients in shelter who receive Cash Assistance and are determined to need home visits.

**44. Incorporate Continuum of Care strategic planning into homeless strategy development and establish a leadership reporting structure:** Drawing on the model in other jurisdictions, the City will enhance the role of the Continuum of Care in the policy and planning process. As part of this initiative, the City is exploring ways to further coordinate access and assess need for those experiencing homelessness, following the HUD approach. By September 2016, a leadership reporting structure had been created, and regular meetings were scheduled with the Continuum of Care co-chairs and DHS and HRA leadership.

**45. Provide clear and concise information and written materials to clients about available assistance and programs:** Materials describing available assistance and programs have been compiled and are ready for distribution; materials will be distributed throughout the spring. We continue with ongoing work to provide updated materials as appropriate and replenished supplies.

**46. Call on the State to:** (a) permit use of Medicaid funds for apartment search and shelter relocation services for homeless clients with disabilities; and (b) approve HRA's requested FEPS plan modifications: These policy changes will enhance both rehousing and prevention efforts. Though the FEPS settlement, the HRA FEPS plan was approved and will be implemented after the settlement is approved by the court. Medicaid waiver issues have been affected by the change in administrations in Washington.

### **Turning the Tide on Homelessness in New York City**

In February, the Administration announced a comprehensive borough-based plan—titled *Turning the Tide on Homelessness in New York City*—to shrink the footprint of the City's homeless shelter system by 45 percent and reduce the shelter census over the next five years. *Turning the Tide* builds on the reforms identified as part of the 90-day review that began in December 2015, for which a comprehensive operational review of homeless programs was conducted.

Our vision of *Turning the Tide* relies on three approaches:

- First, doing more to keep people in their homes by stopping evictions, helping families and individuals remain with family members in the community, and making housing more affordable.
- Second, continuing to enhance our HOME-STAT program to bring people in from the streets.
- Third, a reimagined approach to providing shelter that:
  - Ends use of the 17-year cluster apartment program by the end of 2021 and the decades-old use of commercial hotel facilities by the end of 2023;
  - Cuts the total number of shelter facilities by almost 45% by getting out of 360 cluster apartment and commercial hotel locations and replacing them with a smaller number of 90 new high quality shelters in all five boroughs; and
  - Provides homeless families and individuals with an opportunity to be in shelter as close as possible to their own communities and the anchors of life – like schools, jobs, health care, houses of worship and family – to help them get back on their feet and out of shelter more quickly.

#### **Keeping people in their homes and moving them off the streets:**

- **Affordable housing:** 200,000 affordable apartments preserved; in just three years the City has financed a record 62,506 affordable residences.
- **Affordable Housing Update:** Committed \$1.9 billion to expand our housing programs to include 10,000 apartments focused on seniors, veterans and other low-income families.
- **Added rental assistance for seniors:** We continue our work with our colleagues in Albany to pass the mansion tax that will create a new Elder Rental Assistance program to help more than 25,000 seniors stay in their homes.
- **Rental assistance/rehousing initiatives:** Since 2014, over 55,000 people have secured permanent housing through our rental assistance and rehousing initiatives.
- **Emergency rental assistance:** We provided emergency rental assistance to 161,000 households, helping rent burdened New Yorkers at risk of eviction stay in their homes.
- **Supportive Housing:** 15,000 new units of Supportive Housing will be provided over the next 15 years, representing the largest municipal commitment to supportive housing.
- **Legal assistance:** As the Administration provided increased funding for legal services, more than 40,000 New Yorkers were able to stay in their homes and evictions are down 24%.
- **Legal Assistance Update:** Earlier this year, the City made a commitment to providing universal access to counsel in Housing Court proceedings. Phased in over five years, all

people facing eviction in Housing Court will have access to free legal assistance and all people with low-incomes will have full legal representation.

- **Street homeless:** We moved 690 individuals off streets into transitional programs or permanent housing last year.

### **Making Long-Needed Operational Reforms:**

- **90 day review:** At the Mayor's direction, we took an in depth look at homeless services resulting in 46 reforms aimed at preventing homelessness, addressing street homelessness, improving conditions and safety in shelter, and helping New Yorkers transition from shelter to permanent housing.
- **Shelter conditions:** Inspections are up 50%, while violations are down 83%. In 2016, the City conducted almost 13,000 inspections – a 50% increase from 2015 – and with nonprofit providers fixed more than 14,000 code violations.
- **Close Cluster Apartments:** We have gotten out of more than 750 cluster apartments, prioritizing those with the most serious problems and working to end the use of clusters all together.
- **Security: Doubled Investments, NYPD Takes the Lead:** in 2016, NYPD conducted a comprehensive review of security at homeless shelters. The Administration doubled the 2013 investment in DHS security, with a total annual security spending of \$217 million for FY17.
- **Security Update:** As of 2017, NYPD oversees DHS shelter security, including standardizing and professionalizing security, surveillance, staff training and deployment.
- **End Vets Homelessness:** The Administration placed 3,153 homeless veterans into permanent housing; and in 2015, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) declared chronic veteran homelessness a thing of the past.

### **Reimagined Shelter Strategy:**

- **Closing All Cluster Apartments and Commercial Hotel Facilities:** Over the course of this plan, we will get out of all 360 cluster apartment sites and commercial hotels and replace them with a smaller number of 90 new borough-based shelters. There are approximately 270 buildings with cluster apartments in them with approximately 10,000 people in roughly 2,900 units. And around 7,500 individuals occupy hotel rooms.
- **Creating Fewer New Borough-Based Replacement Shelters:** The City will open approximately 20 shelters annually over the next five years with a wide range of services onsite. This borough-based approach will allow families and individuals to be placed in proximity to schools, jobs, health care, houses of worship, family and neighbors.

### **Turning the Tide Together:**

- As we shrink the footprint of shelters citywide by 45%, we will reform how we notify communities about our plans to open shelters when they are needed to meet multiple court-ordered right to shelter mandates. And we welcome the support of this body in bringing our providers suitable locations to open these needed facilities.

### **Legislation Before the Committee**

As the Committee considers the package of legislation before it today, we want to provide some initial feedback on the bills. In each instance, we support the intent of the bill, and in many cases we are already doing the work required by the proposed legislation. We look forward to working with the Council to address potential gaps as well as how the proposed legislation aligns with the work currently underway so as not to duplicate resources and ensure appropriate outcomes for our clients.

**Intro 622**, to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring the Department of Homeless Services to educate homeless persons on domestic violence and child abuse.

We agree with the intent of Intro 622, recognizing over 34% of families entering shelter have a history of domestic violence and we need to target our efforts to engage these families and connect them with needed services. The City is also committed to a broad prevention strategy to avert violence before it takes place and engage survivors sooner, issues that are front and center in the current work of the Mayor's Task Force on Domestic Violence.

After the 90-day review several recommendations were made to address the prevalence of intimate partner violence (IPV) in the homeless population and to improve client services for survivors of IPV. One of those recommendations was to enhance domestic violence services at DHS shelters by providing IPV specific training for shelter staff, contracted staff, DHS Peace Officers and contracted security.

As a result, the Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence (OCDV) and DHS created a work plan for providing these trainings. OCDV created a comprehensive training on Intimate Partner Violence (IPV101) facilitated by OCDV Policy and Training Coordinators that aims to equip shelter staff with the knowledge, skills and tools they need to effectively identify and engage with survivors. OCDV began the enhanced IPV trainings for DHS in June 2016, and has since facilitated 87 trainings reaching approximately 2,200 staff members. The following is a breakdown of OCDV DHS trainings to date:

- DHS Family Service Staff: 31 trainings and 4 presentations have been provided and approximately 680 people attended the trainings and 74 attended the presentations.
- Adult Family Services Staff: 7 trainings attended by 121 staff members.

- DHS Single Adult Staff: 6 Train the Trainer Courses were provided and 89 people attended.
- DHS Prevention – Homebase: 7 trainings were provided and 133 staff attended.
- DHS Peace Officers: 32 trainings were provided and a total of 1,047 staff attended, consisting of DHS Peace Officers, DHS Cadets, Sergeants and Lieutenants, and Captains.

The Administration is ready to collaborate with the Council to further improve our response to domestic violence, particularly as it effects the homeless population, and we look forward to discussing the best practices in addressing this public health epidemic.

DHS currently has information pertaining to the identification and reporting of instances of child abuse, including written materials at intake and in shelter.

**Intro 1066**, to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring the Department of Homeless Service to conduct quarterly point-in-time counts of the unsheltered homeless population

As part of HOMESTAT being fully implemented, the Agency already conducts quarterly counts in addition to the annual HUD-required Homeless Outreach Population Estimate (HOPE) Count.

**Intro 1443**, to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring that certain Department of Homeless Services employees be trained in administering opioid antagonists.

Prior to the introduction of this bill, DHS began an initiative to train DHS and provider staff on the administration of opioid antagonists. Naloxone training for DHS staff has been completed. Likewise, all providers participated in the training, except for one provider which will be addressed through the contract oversight process. In a separate effort within HRA, we are training staff at HASA emergency housing.

**Intro 1460**, to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring the formation of an interagency coordinating council to combat homelessness

Following the 90-day review, an interagency coordinating council to combat homelessness was convened. The Deputy Mayor of Health and Human Services leads the council, which includes the other Deputy Mayors and the senior leadership of 20 City agencies. The council meets quarterly and smaller working groups meet as well.

**Intro 1459**, to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to updating the report on utilization of and applications for multi-agency emergency housing assistance

DSS supports the change to the report that is contemplated within this bill, which adds information to an existing report on the total number of unduplicated persons utilizing all City-

administered facilities and disaggregated. As we continue to develop an updated and transparent accounting of our shelter population, this bill is in line with that effort.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify and discuss the Agency's progress in implementing the 46 reforms that the Mayor adopted following last year's 90-day review of homeless services in New York City. I welcome your questions.