

Testimony | November 24, 2020

## Enterprise Community Partners, the Real Estate Board of New York (REBNY), and The Legal Aid Society to The Committee on General Welfare of the New York City Council Concerning Intro. 0148

As members of the Eviction Prevention for Non-Payment Solutions Roundtable, part of the broader Project Parachute initiative, we thank Chair Levin and the Committee on General Welfare for the opportunity to testify today in support of Intro. 0148 and to highlight the importance of interventions upstream of the legal eviction process, such as expanding access to rental assistance to youth aging out of foster care, as an effective tool to prevent homelessness .

[Project Parachute](#) is a coalition of owners, non-profit organizations, and service providers based on the shared commitment to support vulnerable tenants during the pandemic and in its aftermath. Project Parachute has provided millions in [funding](#), administered by Enterprise Community Partners, to the City's seven Homebase community-based providers, organizations that are on the frontlines of addressing the homelessness crisis and which have the experience and infrastructure, such as walk-in clinics, to provide a range of social services to low-income New Yorkers impacted by COVID-19.

To find long-term ways to reduce the number of evictions due to non-payment, Enterprise convened a diverse partnership of stakeholders, including representatives from Enterprise, Real Estate Board of New York (REBNY), The Legal Aid Society, Homeless Services United (HSU), New York State Association for Affordable Housing (NYSFAFH), tenant advocates, and other housing and service providers for the Eviction Prevention for Non-Payment Solutions Roundtable as part of the broader Project Parachute initiative.

Together, roundtable participants seek to develop solutions for lower-income tenants, including those receiving rent subsidies and those living in affordable units and buildings, who are in arrears. We hope to avoid eviction through upstream interventions. Intro. 0148's goal to expand voucher access for those aging out of foster care is fully aligned with these goals. We have four key recommendations at this time. First, we recommend HRA waive the requirement for Housing Court proceedings as a part of for FHEPS and CityFHEPS (in community) eligibility.

Second, we recommend HRA add eligibility for seniors and hospital discharges who would otherwise go to shelter. These indisputably vulnerable adults deserve safe, stable housing, and would suffer dire consequences if they experienced homelessness, especially during the pandemic.

Third, we recommend HRA fully implement CityFHEPS eligibility for youth aging out of foster care. [Research has shown](#) that youth aging out of foster care are at an elevated risk of housing

instability and homelessness. We understand that, under Section 10-03(a)(6)(C) of the Administrative Code on CityFHEPS eligibility for people in the community, one qualifying category includes households referred by a CityFHEPS qualifying program, including ACS. However, our experience is that this provision is not being implemented. In order to fully implement CityFHEPS in community eligibility for youth aging out of foster care and homeless youth, ACS and DYCD should draft clear referral procedures and have HRA approve them.

Fourth, we recommend youth aging out of foster care are automatically eligible for State FHEPS.

Expanding access to rental vouchers for vulnerable populations, such as those aging out of foster care, and waiving the eviction proceeding requirement, is the right thing to do and treats our fellow New Yorkers who are experiencing housing instability with more dignity. Expanded access and more fair eligibility standards makes fiscal sense too as it is more cost-effective for government intervention to keep or place someone in their home than it is to provide shelter. Furthermore, expanded voucher access is also a proven effective tool to integrate neighborhoods of opportunity and provide financial security for tenants in neighborhoods experiencing significant change and transition.

Intro. 0148, which counts time spent in foster care as homelessness for the purpose of meeting voucher eligibility requirements, recognizes that foster care does not necessarily translate to long term housing stability, and makes these critical voucher programs available to a subset of New Yorkers who are especially vulnerable to housing insecurity and eviction.

It is critical that New York City and state step up to provide new resources so New Yorkers can avoid housing court and the legal eviction process. Stronger public policy decisions can be made when those decisions are grounded in publicly available data. Unfortunately, there is significant room for improvement in the data transparency around existing programs and little accountability measures in place to track fund expenditures overtime. What we do definitively know is that preventive care is always more cost effective in the long term. The National Institutes of Health has demonstrated this [for health care](#), and recent history has shown it to be true for [infrastructure](#), and there is an accepted health link to [housing stability](#).

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important issue. The members of the Eviction Prevention for Non-Payment Solutions Roundtable are available for further discussion on the recommendations.