



# Effective Solutions to Immediately Address New York's Statewide Homelessness Crisis

## *2025 State Legislative Platform*

No single publicly available tool accurately captures how many New Yorkers across the state are sleeping in public spaces and shelters. Additionally, there's no way to measure how many people are doubled or tripled up with family or friends because they can't afford rent or a home of their own. To determine the severity of this statewide problem, we have the Department of Housing and Urban Development's annual point-in-time survey, which estimated that more than [158,010 people across New York State experienced homelessness in 2024](#). In New York City, more than [130,438 people slept in shelters](#) on any night at the end of October 2024, based on data compiled by the nightly census. The most deplorable public statistic, however, is the statewide total of homeless youth in public schools. Data from the NY State Technical and Educational Assistance Center for Homeless Students (NYS TEACHS) showed that [over 155,000 children were homeless during the 2022-2023 school year - 35,000 of them living outside of NYC](#). The undeniable fact is that homelessness is not a crisis limited or unique to New York City; **every community across the state is facing the consequences of governmental inaction and is witnessing firsthand the worsening homelessness crisis.**

To solve homelessness, it is vital to tackle the interconnected eviction and affordability crises. There are countless rent-burdened households that are one paycheck away from homelessness and struggling to afford rising living costs. According to the NY State Unified Court System, this housing insecurity has led to [179,648 active eviction cases](#) throughout New York as of December 2024. The lack of programs outside of NYC to pay back arrears or rapidly rehouse people after an eviction means more and more people are spending years of their lives in a perpetual state of homelessness.

**VOCAL-NY Homelessness Union** consists of community members currently or formerly experiencing homelessness, and it fights to end the homelessness crisis and to win a guarantee of housing for all New Yorkers. New York politicians must build on the historic housing package passed in 2024 by enacting and fully funding immediate solutions to homelessness in the 2025 legislative session. The following solutions are investments that will create pathways out of homelessness and provide stability for many communities.

### **Investing in Solutions to Protect New Yorkers from Homelessness, Eviction, and Poverty**

**Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP) - [S72/A1704 \(Kavanagh/Rosenthal\)](#):** Establishes a state-funded rental assistance program for New Yorkers who are currently homeless or at risk of homelessness. When implemented with sustainable funding, this statewide program would decrease homelessness and increase stable housing for people across New York State.

**HIV Housing for NY - [S442/A3355 \(Hoylman-Sigal/Bronson\)](#):** To end the HIV epidemic, New York State must expand the existing 30% rent cap available only in the five boroughs to HIV-positive New Yorkers in Upstate and Long Island. The legislation mandates the state to fund localities to implement the program alongside existing public assistance benefits. No matter where in the state they live, all low-income New Yorkers with HIV facing homelessness deserve access to life-saving rental assistance.

**Cash Assistance Reform:** VOCAL-NY supports efforts to reform the cash assistance system by increasing payment standards, expanding who is eligible, and eliminating bureaucratic hurdles. New York State must recognize that the only meaningful way to combat the massive increases in the cost of living is to give money directly to people in need and recognize that those people know best how to spend their money. To this end, passing these two bills is critical:

- **Increase Cash Assistance Now!** - [S1127/A106 \(Persaud/Rosenthal\)](#): increases the payment standards of cash assistance programs, which have not been adjusted since 1987.
- **Equity in Public Assistance Payments** - [S113/A108 \(Cleare/Rosenthal\)](#): ensures that shelter residents on public assistance receive the same payment standard as those who are housed.

### **Eliminating Barriers New Yorkers Face in Accessing Services and Care**

**#WiFi4Homeless** - [S4561A/A1755 \(Gonzalez/Reyes\)](#): Homeless New Yorkers residing in temporary housing lack basic internet access, which prevents them from searching for and applying for permanent housing and jobs, participating in remote schooling, applying for government benefits, obtaining necessary medical care, and more. The bill creates reliable internet access for people living in temporary housing and ensures the state covers the expenses incurred by local social service districts.

**Quarterly Shelter Inspections** - [S2514/A9165 \(Ramos/Meeks\)](#): Despite being one of the country's largest and most well-funded shelter systems, New York State shelters are notorious for bad conditions and corrupt practices. The state has often ignored shelter residents' complaints. However, that can change by immediately requiring the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) to increase shelter inspections at least four times a year. These inspections will ensure people have the necessary services to get them into permanent housing.

### **Building the Caring and Compassionate Housing Infrastructure to House New Yorkers**

**Expanding and Improving Supportive Housing:** Supportive Housing is a critical intervention for tackling the intersecting issues of homelessness, substance use, and unmet mental health needs. Through the Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative, New York State has built much-needed emergency and long-term supportive housing across the state. However, existing and future supportive housing units must include mechanisms to hold providers accountable to guarantee that supportive housing tenants receive quality onsite services and reside in dignified living conditions.

**Social Housing Development Authority** - [S8494/A9088 \(Cleare/Gallagher\)](#): The solutions proposed in this document are hindered by the lack of new, deeply affordable housing; New York state must get back in the business of building housing that isn't focused on generating profit, but is controlled by and for the people who live there. VOCAL-NY wholeheartedly supports efforts to establish a Social Housing Development Authority (SHDA) tasked with building, preserving, and managing housing using a 100% union workforce. New York State must build permanent homes for everyone, especially for the hundreds of thousands of homeless New Yorkers residing in shelters and on the streets. A Social Housing Development Authority, alongside the initiatives mentioned in this document, will get us closer to ending homelessness in New York State.