



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

## SENATOR BRAD HOYLMAN, EMPIRE STATE PRIDE AGENDA AND ADVOCATES LAUNCH #5000TooMany CAMPAIGN URGING RESTORATION OF FUNDING FOR HOMELESS YOUTH SHELTERS

BRAD HOYLMAN February 12, 2015

| ISSUE: **YOUTH, SHELTERS**



*Coalition Calls On New York State Legislature To Allocate \$4.75 Million Toward Homeless Youth Shelters In FY 2015-16 Budget*

*Cites Data Showing Homeless Youth Shelter Funding Has Been Slashed 66 Percent Since 2008, Number Of Homeless Youth Getting Turned Away From Shelters Has Skyrocketed From 573 To 5,041*

*Hoylman: “It’s Unconscionable That Thousands Of New York Kids Struggle Each Year To Find A Safe Place To Sleep.”*

NEW YORK, NY – State Senator Brad Hoylman (D-Manhattan), the Empire State Pride Agenda, the Coalition for Homeless Youth and other advocates today met on the steps of City Hall to launch a campaign calling for restored funding for homeless youth shelters in the New York State budget.

The campaign, dubbed #5000TooMany, highlighted data from the New York State Office of Children and Family Services that showed more than 5,000 instances in 2012 when kids were turned away from homeless shelters due to lack of beds. Since 2009, funding for homeless youth shelters was cut by two-thirds, and the number of homeless kids who have been turned away each year from shelters across the state has skyrocketed from 573 in 2008 to 5,041 in 2012.

Senator Hoylman and the new coalition are calling on the state Legislature to allocate \$4.75 million toward homeless youth shelters, partially restoring funding to its FY 2008-2009 level of \$6.3 million. This restored funding will create 1,000 additional beds to alleviate overcrowding in shelters across the state.

**State Senator Brad Hoylman (D-Manhattan) said:** “It’s unconscionable that thousands of kids struggle each year to find a safe place to sleep. An investment by the legislature to increase homeless youth funding would help protect the most vulnerable among us from sexual abuse and trafficking, reduce HIV/AIDS transmissions and keep our kids out of the juvenile justice system. This is a moral imperative and we need to act now. Governor Cuomo has been an advocate for at-risk kids through his youth jobs program and Recommendations for Juvenile Justice Reform report, and I look forward to working with him and my colleagues in the Legislature on this issue.”

**Empire State Pride Agenda Executive Director Nathan M. Schaefer said:** “New York fails when thousands of homeless LGBT youth are turned away from shelters because funding has fallen far short of what’s needed to provide warm, safe beds for our children. We commend Senator Hoylman for leading the charge and call on the New York State Legislature to restore critical resources for our most vulnerable. We can and must do better because when one person is left out in the cold, none of us are warm.”

**Coalition for Homeless Youth Executive Director Jim Bolas said:** "All youth deserve a safe place to sleep! Because of past cuts to programs for homeless youth, we are forced to turn away youth. Available shelter actually saves the state and localities from paying exorbitant costs to the medical, jail or mental health care systems. It only makes sense to fund homeless youth programs. Housing homeless youth lessens their risk of sexual exploitation."

**New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer said:** “There is nothing more disgraceful than a society that fails to treat children with compassion, and here in New York City homeless children were turned away from shelters more than 5,000 times. These children—including many LGBT youths--were told there wasn’t enough space. That is not an acceptable answer. I’m proud to stand with Senator Hoylman and others in calling on the state to increase funding for homeless youth to \$4.75 million. With that kind of investment, we can protect children from sexual abuse and trafficking, keep kids out of the juvenile justice system and reduce HIV/AIDS transmissions.”

**New York City Public Advocate Letitia James said:** “There is simply no reason a young person should have to be turned away from a shelter and spend the night on the streets. Yet there are nearly 20,000 youth under the age of 24 who are homeless in our city and an estimated 40% of these youth are LGBT. This is unacceptable. Government has a responsibility to provide resources to help these young adults, which is why I am joining the call for increased funding for homeless youth shelters.”

**Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer said:** "The National Center on Family Homelessness ranked New York the country's 16th worst state in addressing child homelessness in 2013. A major factor in this failing grade has been the fact that state funding for homeless youth has been slashed and frozen at just one third of what it was in 2008. I strongly support Senator Hoylman's call to increase shelter funding for youth to \$4.75 million, and I support this funding's eventual restoration to the full 2008 level of \$6.3 million. We must stop failing homeless youth in New York."

**State Senator Adriano Espaillat (D-Manhattan/Bronx) said:** "New York City is in the midst of a housing crisis. This is no more evident than by the number of youth who are homeless, and the fact that there are not enough beds to give them basic shelter. I commend Senator Hoylman for bringing this issue to the forefront and requesting the funds necessary to get these children off the streets."

**State Senator Jesse Hamilton said:** "As a community, we have a responsibility to make provision for basic human rights. We have a special responsibility to take care that the human rights of young people are respected. The fact that homeless youth were turned away from shelters not once, not twice, but more than 5,000 times is unconscionable. Each instance of turning away a young person in need of help was a failure. It is time to reverse that record of failure. It is time to get the gears of government moving, time to act, time to help, not only help these young people, but every New Yorker in search of a home."

**State Senator Jose M. Serrano (D-Manhattan/Bronx) said:** "Far too many young people are being turned away from homeless shelters. We must provide adequate funding for New York State's homeless youth to ensure that this trend does not continue. The more time young people spend on the street, the greater the risk to their physical and mental health. We must do more to provide this population a shelter and a gateway to services so they may integrate into society. Many thanks to Senator Brad Hoylman for advocating for the under-served

homeless population."

**Assistant Assembly Speaker Felix W. Ortiz (D-Kings) said:** "Additional funding is desperately needed to ensure that our homeless youth seeking shelter are not turned back into the streets. This urgent problem must be taken seriously by our city and state leaders. I share the concerns of my colleagues and am ready to seek additional resources for this vulnerable group of young people."

**Assembly Member Linda B. Rosenthal (D-Manhattan) said:** "In a state with such riches, it is shameful that even one young person is forced to sleep on the street because there are not enough beds. While the number of homeless young people in New York State has steadily increased over the last 10 years, state funding for beds for homeless youth has actually decreased over the same time period. The state has a responsibility to provide adequate funding to protect this vulnerable population, and that is why I am circulating a letter to my colleagues asking them to support an increase."

**Assembly Member Richard Gottfried said:** "It is tragic that any city should have nowhere for homeless youth to go to stay off the streets and out of the cold. But it is absolutely unacceptable for the greatest city in the world to turn away homeless youth more than 5,000 times a year – as occurred in 2012, the last full year for which such statistics are available. New Yorkers cannot continue to look the other way while government at the city, state and federal levels fails to support programs serving homeless youth, so many of whom are homeless, at-risk LGBT youth. It's time to stand up and make a change!"

**Assembly Member Daniel O'Donnell (D-Manhattan) said:** "No more excuses; we must end youth homelessness. It is simply unacceptable for children to be turned away from shelters to fend for themselves, and I applaud Senator Hoylman for championing this important cause. Children become homeless for many reasons, but a disproportionate number have been

ejected from their homes for identifying as LGBTQ. We have all the more responsibility to support these young people when they have not received support elsewhere. I stand with Senator Hoylman in calling for sufficient funding to house every child in need in New York State. We must not turn even one child away.”

**Assembly Member Matthew Titone said:** “It is our responsibility as a state to ensure that our vulnerable children have a safe haven to turn to, rather than the streets.”

**Council Member Ben Kallos (D-Manhattan) said:** “With the number of homeless New Yorkers rising to 60,000, we must invest in services that will protect and support all New Yorkers. Homeless children should never be turned away from a shelter because there is no place to sleep. I am pleased to join Senator Hoylman and many others to advocate to increase funding for homeless youth to \$4.75 million.”

**Council Member Dan Garodnick (D-Manhattan) said:** “Turning hundreds of children away from shelter into the cold is not consistent with our values, and simply cannot stand. We have a moral obligation to take care of the most vulnerable among us, and we aren't doing enough.”

**Council Member Corey Johnson (D-Manhattan) said:** “I believe that societies should be judged by how they care for their most vulnerable. As long as children are sleeping on the street, we have failed. Our youth deserve a budget that includes funding for shelter beds. I applaud Senator Brad Hoylman and my colleagues in Albany for championing this important cause.”

**Council Member Mark Levine (D-Manhattan) said:** “No one should be turned away from a homeless shelter, especially runaway and homeless youth. I commend Senator Hoylman for his leadership on this important issue and join his call for the restoration of these funds.”

**Council Member Rosie Mendez said:** “Homeless Youth are among the most vulnerable populations in New York City. Everyday a young person is attempting to find ways to

survive on the streets of the City. Every year, members of the City and State Legislature ask for more funding for homeless youth. I will continue to call on the Governor to reinstate and increase existing funding for homeless youth, especially LGBTQ youth in New York City.”

**Covenant House Executive Director Creighton Drury said:** “It is heartbreaking to know that in 2015 too many young people are still being forced to sell their bodies and face sexual exploitation at the hands of pimps and traffickers simply because there are not enough safe, warm, and caring places to stay. We are grateful for Senator Hoylman and other leaders in Albany who are placing much-needed attention on this crucial issue in an effort to build upon New York City's demonstrated leadership in expanding shelter and other critical resources for runaway, homeless, and trafficked youth.”

**Ali Forney Center Executive Director Carl Siciliano said:** “To be a homeless youth without access to safe shelter is to be cold, desperate and terrified. Too many of the LGBT youths we serve suffer from the lack of shelter. I yearn to see the day when every youth in New York State is guaranteed access to shelter.”

Since the 2008-2009 Fiscal Year, funding for homeless youth shelters has been cut by two-thirds, 66 percent in inflation adjusted dollars, from \$6.3 million to just \$2.35 million. Funding has been frozen at \$2.35 million for the past four years, leaving youth shelters throughout New York State overcrowded and without essential resources amid difficult economic times.

Young people who are turned away from shelters are often forced to drastic measures to find a place to sleep. [A 2013 study by Covenant House](#) found that nearly a quarter of homeless kids were at high risk of being targeted victims of sexual assault and trafficked for sex crimes. This deplorable situation also leads to significant health problems for these children, including sexually transmitted diseases, HIV infection, drug addiction, depression and suicide.

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