



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brian Kavanagh

## Governor Hochul Signs Legislation to Combat Homelessness and Expand Housing Affordability in New York City

BRIAN KAVANAGH December 10, 2021

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Governor Kathy Hochul today in Manhattan signed legislation S.6573/A.8009 which makes housing vouchers available to eligible families under the Family Homelessness and Eviction Protection Supplement (FHEPS) program in New York City. This legislation raises the maximum rent payable under the FHEPS program to cover the true cost of rent in New York City, one of the most expensive housing markets in the nation.

"The homelessness crisis, like the COVID-19 pandemic, has taken a toll on our state, disproportionately impacting Black and Latino communities," **Governor Hochul said.** "New York State is here to work with New York City to support families facing unprecedented hardship. I want to thank Mayor-elect Adams for his partnership as we work together to confront this issue head-on. Everyone deserves the dignity of a roof over their head, and I am proud to sign this legislation that will make that a reality for New Yorkers in need."

This bill will expand FHEPS access to serve more families in need, ensuring that more families avoid eviction by remaining in their homes and are placed in stable housing. This bill will raise the rent cap from 85 percent to 100 percent of the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Fair Market Rent. Furthermore, FHEPS is the only preventive program available to survivors of domestic violence and their families who receive public assistance. Raising the FHEPS levels and preventing more evictions will allow the State and City to achieve the mutual goal of using FHEPS to keep New Yorkers in permanent housing, out of shelters, and connected to social services to enhance their ability to ultimately move off the caseload.

The signature of this legislation is the latest step Governor Hochul has taken to fight the housing crisis in New York. Earlier this week, Governor Hochul signed the [Loft Law](#), legislation making it unlawful to disrupt or fail to provide essential services and habitability for interim multiple dwelling units and allowing tenants to pursue a claim in New York City Housing Court. Last month Governor Hochul announced that New York State has requested \$996 million in additional federal funding from the U.S. Department of Treasury for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) to help fulfill an unmet need among struggling tenants and landlords. In October, Governor Hochul signed a [legislative package](#) aimed toward solidifying tenant rights.

**The Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance Executive Deputy Commissioner Barbara C. Guinn said,** "Governor Hochul's action today provides low-income families in New York City with expanded opportunities to access quality housing so they can avoid homelessness and provide a safe and secure home for their children. Stabilizing a family's housing today is critical to achieving long-term positive economic and social outcomes for these families and our communities."

**Senator Brian Kavanagh said,** "Thanking Governor Kathy Hochul for signing this legislation, ensuring that more families experiencing homelessness can find stable housing, and reversing the long-held position of the prior administration. Of course, we must do a lot more to end homelessness and ensure that all New Yorkers have stable access to permanent housing that is safe, sustainable, and affordable, but today we're taking a meaningful step toward that goal. We know that this approach will be cheaper, safer, and healthier than keeping people in shelters. I also want to thank Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal for championing this bill in the Assembly, my colleague Senate Social Services Chair Roxanne Persaud for her avid support in the Senate, and Speaker Carl Heastie and Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins for their leadership. Thanks also to the more than 100 organizations that have pushed for this critical reform."

**Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal said,** "By signing into law my legislation to increase the amount of the FHEPS voucher to cover the actual cost of rent, safe, stable and permanent affordable housing Will now be within reach to thousands of vulnerable New York families. Housing is healthcare and it is a human right. Signing this bill into law signals a significant shift in the way that New York State approaches homelessness prevention. Today, the State recognizes that it has a moral obligation, in addition to a legal duty, to provide shelter to those in need. I thank Governor Hochul for her support, and look forward to working with her, my colleagues and the advocates to develop, finance and implement solutions as we work to end homelessness."

**Eric Adams, New York City Mayor-elect, said,** “Even before the pandemic, our affordable housing crisis forced New Yorkers into homelessness and financial stress without adequate relief from the City and State. I thank the Governor for signing this important legislation and the legislature for forwarding it, so that New York City and New York State are aligned in support of renters who desperately need our help.”

**Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer said,** "In order to address homelessness, we must act boldly so vulnerable families throughout New York can avoid eviction and that's exactly what Governor Hochul is here to do today. On behalf of New York families, I thank Senator Kavanagh, Assembly Member Rosenthal, all the advocates across the state, and Governor Hochul for raising the state Family Homelessness and Eviction Prevention Supplement to cover the real cost of rent, giving families at risk for homelessness a critical lifeline towards long-term housing stability. Today's action will help keep thousands off the street and is the right thing to do."

**Council Member Steve Levin said,** "I applaud Governor Hochul, Assemblymember Rosenthal, and Senator Kavanagh for enacting this important legislation. We know that when individuals and families have stable housing, they thrive. By bringing the FHEPS payments up to Fair Market Rent, we can ensure that more vulnerable New Yorkers will stay in their homes."

**Chair of the NYC Council Housing and Buildings Committee, Council Member Robert E. Cornegy, Jr., said,** "This legislation upgrades our support for vulnerable families, recognizing that FHEPS levels set too low means an extremely challenging journey to find housing. Action today means New York families will have more access to stable housing. This legislation provides greater support to vulnerable families in our shared communities; they will face one less obstacle. Granting New York families greater peace of mind serves as the bedrock of any public policy, and is especially important during a holiday season where we uplift one

another. Thanks to Governor Hochul, Senator Kavanagh, Assembly Member Rosenthal, and all those legislators who recognized the importance of this issue. And thanks to all the housing advocates and New Yorkers who joined together to make today's step forward in helping vulnerable families possible."

**Executive Director of Goddard Riverside, Dr. Roderick L. Jones, said,** "For many of the vulnerable communities we serve, this legislation provides critical protection, and is a steppingstone, to recovery from the massive ramifications of the pandemic. We are deeply grateful to Governor Hochul and Assembly Member Rosenthal for signing this legislation into law, and choosing Goddard Riverside as the place to do so. We are committed to the critical work ahead and to strengthening our relationship with our government partners to ensure our communities have the vital resources and services they need to thrive, during this unprecedented period of recovery."

**Executive Director of the Supportive Housing Network of New York, Laura Mascuch said,** "The Supportive Housing Network of New York is delighted that the State is raising the value of the FHEPS voucher to cover the real cost of rent. It will help thousands of homeless families, including those escaping domestic violence, find and afford stable housing. We would like to thank Governor Hochul, Senator Kavanagh and Assemblymember Rosenthal for their incredible leadership on this issue."

**CEO and co-founder of Housing Works, Charles King, said,** "We applaud Governor Hochul for signing Bill S6573/A8009, which will bring the State FHEPS payment standard to a higher and more meaningful rent level, closer to alignment with other low-income housing supports. This legislation is an important step forward to ensure that low-income families served by the State FHEPS program are not excluded from the housing market altogether, or forced into substandard, unsafe apartments. Families experiencing homelessness, particularly those who have experienced hardship or eviction due to the ongoing COVID-19

crisis, will now have greater access to desperately needed housing opportunities. Ideally, all low-income rental assistance programs will employ the same payment standard, in line with the value of a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher, so that no population is left behind in the tight housing market."

**Executive Director, Homeless Services United, Catherine Trapani, said,** "Homeless Services United is extremely grateful to Governor Hochul for signing S.6573/A.8009 into law, to raise rent levels for the State FHEPS rental assistance program. This critical step will ensure that families who would otherwise have become homeless will have the support they need to remain in their homes upon the lifting of the eviction moratorium and will provide victims of domestic violence fleeing abusers the opportunity to secure safe housing using the new, market rate assistance without having to enter shelter. Thank you, Governor Hochul, Assemblymember Rosenthal and Senator Kavanagh for investing in homeless prevention to keep New Yorkers safe and stably housed."

**Deputy Executive Director for Policy with Coalition for the Homeless, Shelly Nortz, said,** "The Coalition for the Homeless is most grateful to Governor Hochul, and sponsors Kavanagh and Rosenthal, for recognizing the vital importance of this legislation. We must do all we can at every level of government to prevent and address homelessness and raising these rent subsidies to fair market levels is a critical first step needed to keep struggling New Yorkers in their homes. It is a smart policy that will save families and save tax dollars at the same time."

**Executive Director of New Destiny Housing and co-lead of the Family Homelessness Coalition, Nicole Branca, said,** "For too long, receiving a FHEPS rental subsidy has done little to help our domestic violence survivors afford an apartment in such an expensive city with so little affordable housing available. We are incredibly grateful to Governor Hochul for signing legislation that will have an immediate and lasting impact on our DV survivors and their children, giving them safe new homes in which they can start over."

**New York Vice President and Market Leader of Enterprise Community Partners, Baaba Halm, said,** "We enthusiastically applaud Governor Kathy Hochul for signing into law the bill that raises state FHEPS to fair market rent and for honoring her commitment to keeping New Yorkers stably housed. The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified the risk of homelessness for families across New York state, and this bill is a crucial solution that will keep thousands of families in their homes while saving millions in the state budget. It will offer much needed support in particular to survivors of domestic violence. We thank Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal and State Senator Brian Kavanagh for their leadership in championing this bill, and we are grateful for the dedicated advocates with whom we worked to push for the passage of this bill."

**President Gateway Housing, Ted Houghton, said,** "Thank you Governor Hochul, Assembly Member Rosenthal and Senator Kavanagh, for all your efforts and leadership implementing this commonsense measure to help homeless and at-risk New Yorkers better afford to rent permanent apartments in New York's overheated housing market. Signing this bill into law increases the amount state rental vouchers can pay, in order to match city and federal voucher rates. It's an important first step in aligning our efforts to house vulnerable New Yorkers, and an inspiring illustration of the new era of collaboration between the city and state."

**President & CEO of Samaritan Daytop Village, Mitchell Netburn, said,** "We applaud Governor Hochul for signing legislation to substantially increase the Family Homelessness and Eviction Protection Supplement. We have seen firsthand at Samaritan Daytop Village how the pandemic, job loss and growing cost of housing have greatly impacted New Yorkers. Many of these families work yet cannot afford the high cost of rent. Through increased rental subsidies, tens of thousands of low-income New Yorkers will finally have the financial resources to move from transitional to permanent housing."

**CEO of Urban Resource Institute, Nathaniel M. Fields, said,** "Homelessness has since the COVID-19 pandemic reached levels not seen since the Great Depression and the majority are families with children, many who are escaping domestic violence. It is vital that support is given to help families escape abuse and avoid eviction and homelessness, combined with programs to help those seeking safety and security find a path back to sustainable permanent housing."