

REBNY Testimony | February 18, 2025

The Real Estate Board of New York to NYS State Senate Standing Committees on Housing, Social Services, and Aging regarding Housing Access Voucher Program

The Real Estate Board of New York (REBNY) is the City's leading real estate trade association representing commercial, residential, and institutional property owners, builders, managers, investors, brokers, salespeople, and other organizations and individuals active in New York City real estate. REBNY appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony on the importance of vouchers in providing rental assistance to New Yorkers in need.

NYS Court Data shows that over 80% of eviction filings are for nonpayment. Helping tenants pay their rent is an important component of the access equation for households in need. Housing vouchers are pivotal in mitigating homelessness, increasing housing stability, and improving long-term health, social, and economic outcomes.

The Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP) ([S72/A1704](#)) is designed as a permanent, statewide Section 8-like rental assistance program. A minimum of fifty percent of HAVP's resources will be dedicated to help homeless New Yorkers across the state find stable housing, while the remainder will go toward eviction prevention for households at risk of becoming homeless. Direct rental assistance is a proven cost-effective method of ensuring people can stay in their homes and access new ones if so preferred. According to a [2024 report published by Women in Need \(Win\)](#), HAVP would provide over \$95 million in savings on emergency shelter costs alone after a full year of implementation. Further, the [Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council's 2024 Recommendations and Progress Report](#) emphasizes the role of a voucher program modeled after Section 8 as a key tool for the State to use to reduce child poverty. Enabling additional and more effective use of rental assistance will expand housing choice for New Yorkers across neighborhoods.

REBNY has supported HAVP for years, and we are pleased to be part of a statewide coalition anchored by Win, Enterprise, Homeless Services United, and the Legal Aid Society, with an increasing number of groups statewide joining in support of this program. REBNY thanks Senator Kavanagh and Assembly Member Rosenthal for their continued sponsorship of HAVP and encourages state leaders to adopt this program.

We also must underscore the importance of efficient program administration of any voucher assistance program to its success in helping tenants secure housing. REBNY frequently hears from members – owners and agents – that the process of obtaining and using a voucher is cumbersome, lengthy, and convoluted. In 2024, REBNY and Women in Need (Win) co-authored [Housing More New Yorkers](#), a policy paper outlining the challenges facing the City’s voucher programs and the subsequent legislative fixes. REBNY and Win share a common goal of improving the voucher process and helping voucher holders find stable housing. This month, a New York Housing Conference [brief](#) highlighted the excessive wait time in the city’s lottery process, which many voucher holders use, to occupy an affordable unit. We ask that these types of program design mistakes are not repeated with a new program and are addressed in existing programs.

Lastly, we cannot discuss the need for rental assistance through vouchers without acknowledging the importance of having places to use those vouchers. New York City is in the throes of a housing crisis marked by a severe lack of new production at all levels and an acute absence of affordable housing needed to meet the City’s diverse socioeconomic needs. Efforts were made in the FY 2024-25 budget to address some of the critical housing supply challenges our State is grappling with, and local efforts are also underway in New York City to address the housing supply crisis and remove well documented [barriers in zoning](#) through [City of Yes](#) and local rezonings like [Midtown South](#). Tools for reinvestment in our existing housing stock are also critically important, which ensures that apartments remain habitable and in a state of good repair.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

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