



**Testimony: Homelessness and Eviction are a Crisis Around the State. Include the Housing Access Voucher Program in the 2026 Budget.**

Joint Public Hearing, Senate Standing Committees on Housing, Social Services and Aging  
February 18, 2025

Thank you to Senator Kavanagh and the Senate committees on housing, social services and aging for holding this important hearing on residential rental assistance programs in New York. My name is Samuel Stein, and I am a Senior Policy Analyst for the Community Service Society of New York (CSS). For roughly 180 years, CSS has provided direct services and advocated for policy to promote economic opportunities for low-income New Yorkers.

Virtually all New Yorkers recognize that housing in our state has become deeply unaffordable. In our 2024 Annual Survey of Housing and Economic Security, New Yorkers from around the state told us that affordable housing was the top factor holding them back from economic advancement. They also told us that if they could spend less on housing, they would be able to save for emergency expenses, pay for food, and save for retirement. More than one-third of respondents reported that they were experiencing housing insecurity, with parents, non-college educated New Yorkers, people with more than one job, and working women being the most vulnerable. Fifteen percent of respondents – and 25 percent of those making less than 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Line – said they were behind on housing payments and at risk of eviction. These vulnerable households were more than twice as likely to have children than those who were current on their housing payment.

Recently, CSS and VOCAL published [a brief on evictions and homelessness across the state](#). In 2022, the most recent year accounted for in the data, the counties with the highest eviction rate – measured as eviction filings as a percentage of renter households – was Rensselaer at 10.7 percent, followed by The Bronx at 9.5 percent, Schenectady at 9 percent, and Niagara and Suffolk at 8.6 percent. Clearly, evictions are a major concern across the state.

Meanwhile, we analyzed data from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to see how homelessness levels had changed from 2014 to 2022. New York City showed a distressing 107 percent rise in homelessness over the course of that decade. But during the same timeframe, many parts of the city experienced an even more explosive growth in homelessness. In Thompsons, Wayne, Ontario, Seneca, Yates, and Chautauqua counties, homelessness jumped by more than 300 percent. In Oneida and Madison counties, the leap

was over 130 percent. In many places, the rise in homeless children was particularly steep. For example, in Orange County, child homelessness jumped by over 200 percent, and in Onondaga, Oswego, and Cayuga Counties the increase was almost 130 percent.

This underscores the clear, pressing, and immediate need for state-level rental assistance. The Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP, [S.72. Kavanagh](#)/[A.1704. Rosenthal](#)) would create a simple, easy to administer rental assistance program modeled after Section 8 and administered by the same Public Housing Authorities already responsible for distributing vouchers. If funded at \$250 million, the program could help 50,000 New Yorkers find permanent housing or remain stably housed and avoid homelessness altogether. This would be a lifeline for the thousands of New Yorkers currently facing homelessness and the over 1 million more who are at risk of eviction. We strongly encourage the Senate to include HAVP in your one-house budget, and to fight for its inclusion in the 2026 budget. The time is now for bold action on homeless and evictions.

We thank you for this opportunity to testify. If you have any questions about my testimony or CSS's research, please contact Samuel Stein at [ssstein@cssny.org](mailto:ssstein@cssny.org).