



## 2023: Roadmap to Ending Homelessness & Winning Permanent Housing in New York City

Within Mayor Eric Adam's first year in office, he has failed to aggressively address the crisis of homelessness that the administration inherited. The Mayor has failed to provide the people of New York a concrete **path out of homeless shelters, access to comprehensive care for the unsheltered and those in need of wraparound services**. The Adams administration has instead resorted to practices of criminalizing, institutionalizing, and incentivizing Big Real Estate, to steadily push out the most vulnerable of New Yorkers seeking permanent, affordable, safe housing. **VOCAL-NY's Homelessness Union** is dedicated to ending homelessness and our **2023 New York City platform** is based on holistic solutions to the crisis, by **focusing on access to services and care, rapid rehousing, and an end to the criminalization of homelessness**.

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### Ending Criminalization of Homelessness:

**Ending Encampment Sweeps:** Mayor Adams' administration has continued a long history of encampment-busting in NYC that systematically invisibilizes and criminalizes street homelessness. The City must end this decades-long practice and fully commit to prioritizing permanent housing placements for all New Yorkers. Encampment sweeps and criminalization will not move people off the streets, only housing will.

**Provide access to public, taxpayer-funded bathrooms in subways & in streets:** Restricting access to public restrooms is a quality of life issue that is often used to criminalize individuals experiencing homelessness resulting in upwards of \$350 in fines. Homeless people experience urinary tract issues and related health problems at a rate 300% higher than the general population. The City must fully open all public restrooms to address this public health crisis because everyone should be **#FreeToPee**.

### Removing Barriers to Permanent Housing:

**Expanding CityFHEPS to Undocumented NYers:** The Council in its authority can expand CityFHEPS eligibility to undocumented families and individuals and allow homeless undocumented New Yorkers the chance to exit the shelter system and secure permanent housing.

**Reform bureaucratic processes to eliminate delays, unnecessary rules, and accelerate housing placements:** It often takes months or longer for a CityFHEPS voucher holder to secure and move into an apartment. Typos, missing documents, and other minor mistakes that at times are not communicated to the applicant, often cause entire applications to be denied or delayed. Removing rules like rent reasonableness and the 90-day shelter stay requirement among others will reduce unnecessary long shelter stays for individuals/households.

**Utility Allowance: [Int. No. 0229 \(Caban\)](#):** The legislation would prohibit the Department of Social Services (DSS) from deducting a utility allowance from the payment standard, the total amount of money an agency will pay for an apartment. For CityFHEPS voucher holders, utilities are subtracted from the payment standard, denied a credit for their utilities, and are often priced out of apartments due to the final payment standard being low for the monthly rent.

**Combat source of income discrimination:** Many landlords refuse to accept vouchers and rent apartments to CityFHEPS households, a form of discrimination known as Source of Income Discrimination (SOL), which is illegal. The NYC Human Rights Commission (CCHR) Source of Income Unit needs to be rebuilt and equipped with the funding and staff capacity to enforce the rights of CityFHEPS households.

**Improving oversight and inspections of CityFHEPS apartments:** With a limited pool of apartments available, more often than not, landlords accepting voucher holders tend to do fewer repairs and upkeep of these units. CityFHEPS voucher holders are more likely to settle for substandard housing and/or find it impossible to move out and find better apartments. The Council must improve its code enforcement processes to ensure that necessary repairs are conducted in apartments with voucher holders and fines are collected from landlords in violation.

**Fair Chance for Housing Act: [Int. No. 0632 \(Powers\)](#):** The act would prohibit housing discrimination on the basis of arrest or conviction history in NYC and make criminal background checks or inquiries about arrest or conviction records at any stage in the application process, an unlawful discriminatory practice. Studies show that those who have been incarcerated at least once are seven times more likely to experience homelessness than the general public. This impacts 750,000 New Yorkers with conviction records.

**Use all available vacant housing stock, public housing units, and vouchers to rehouse homeless New Yorkers:** During a housing shortage and a global pandemic, there are currently tens of thousands of rent-stabilized apartments that are sitting vacant. With promises of continued rapid proliferation of housing, the vacancy rate of units currently at or below \$1,500 is 1%, its lowest in three decades, and other 2,000 supportive housing units are sitting empty. The Mayor & the Council must develop an immediate plan to rapidly rehouse all homeless New Yorkers by: utilizing all vacant apartments and set-aside HPD & NYCHA units to house homeless residents, utilizing federal and local vouchers, and increasing the number of and access to supportive housing units available.

### **Access to Services & Care:**

**Care Not Cops: [Int. No. 0856 \(Caban\)](#):** Mandates that any homeless outreach initiated by the city be conducted by non-violent service workers trained in trauma-informed care and provides tangible support items, such as a pair of socks. The bill would prohibit the city from issuing tickets or summonses to homeless New Yorkers using materials or parts to create bedding or temporary shelter.

**Municipal Broadband:** Internet is an essential need for all, especially for low-income and homeless New Yorkers who lack basic Internet access or are forced to pay high prices for slow service. The City must provide publicly owned- high-quality, universal internet for free for those in need, and low cost for everyone else by 2026 (starting with shelters, public housing, elderly residences, and households with students).

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