



Protecting Homeless New Yorkers and Ending the Statewide Housing Crisis An Emergency Response Plan

Recent [Deaths of Homeless New Yorkers From Storm Fern](#) Were Decades in the Making and the Result of Political Inaction – Especially In Albany

For over 25 years VOCAL-NY has fought to end homelessness. Policy experts, lawyers, service providers, and New Yorkers with direct experience with homelessness have called upon city and state governments to make critical investments, and enact proven public policy. While we have seen some positive steps forward over the years, **overall there is a lack of political leadership to actually end the housing and homeless crisis, especially coming out of Albany.**

The result: New York has become complacent to the homeless crisis and would rather see people die on the street than take political action to address the root causes. The recent deaths of homeless New Yorkers during Storm Fern should be added to a much longer list of those who have died, and those who have lived without housing – or even shelter – across our state.

Despite this, Governor Hochul's most recent Executive Budget fails to mention homelessness or how to address the immediate housing crisis. The Governor touts [tens of billions in state budget surplus](#), but so far has failed to commit the resources that our state needs – including investments to cities and counties – to address this crisis. Mayors across New York must also act, but with the state's ability to tax and spend, Governor Hochul and the executive branch serve an essential role in addressing homelessness across all municipalities. **As a movement of New Yorkers hit hardest by government inaction, VOCAL-NY calls for the following action to prevent more homelessness New Yorkers from dying preventable deaths.**

Demands for Governor Hochul and the Executive Branch

- 1. Disperse emergency funding to localities for eviction prevention to keep people housed, rapid re-housing programs, and services for street homeless New Yorkers:** Cities and counties need immediate resources to keep people at risk of homelessness in housing with long-term rental assistance, aid rapid rehousing efforts supporting those that lose their place to live, and to fund outreach services to people living on the streets. To determine the level of financial need, New York State must do a rapid statewide assessment in conjunction with Mayors and County Executives to determine the actual need. Governor Hochul allocated [\\$77 million in the Executive Budget for policing](#) in the subways, an example of funds that would be better utilized to fund services and emergency housing.

2. **Increase Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP) funding to at least \$250 million in FY27 budget:** The HAVP could already be housing New Yorkers across the state had Governor Hochul proactively supported the program. She has allocated the pilot with only \$50 million annually so far, allowing for a vastly inadequate number of vouchers for the entire state – less than 2,000 total.
3. **Support the [REST Act](#) and ensure the protection of rent stabilized apartments across New York:** Keeping people in their homes is essential to ending New York's homelessness crisis. Governor Hochul must support an expansion of rent stabilization across the state through the REST Act. She must also stand firm in protecting rent stabilization laws against inevitable pressure from real estate and landlord lobbies so that New Yorkers are able to afford rent and stay housed.

Demands for New York Mayors and Municipalities

1. **Fund and implement the broadest versions of local rental assistance programs, such as CityFHEPS:** We urge mayors across the state to allocate the largest amount possible for rental assistance in order to prevent evictions and interrupt chronic homelessness, even if it means reducing from other budget items that are not as essential. For example, in New York City, we have long-called for a portion of the [\\$16 billion](#) allocated for NYPD and DOC be reinvested into housing and community based care. This kind of reallocation of funding is crucial to resolving homelessness and public safety concerns.
2. **Publicly commit to ending chronic homelessness locally and providing actionable steps they are taking to address this crisis:** The political will of mayors and county executives is critical to solving homelessness. For that reason, we call on every mayor and county executive across the state to make this public commitment, provide regular updates on their steps and engage with service providers, grassroots advocates and people experiencing homelessness on solutions. Furthermore they must ask the state for the necessary resources to actually solve homelessness, not just improve things around the edges.
3. **Identify used or underutilized space that could be converted into low-barrier housing, or respite centers:** Cities must do an immediate inventory of city-owned, or seriously distressed property that could be rapidly converted into housing, or care centers.

New York's homelessness crisis is a disgrace. Every elected official must acknowledge the governmental, as well as moral failure it presents – and they must act.