



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

CITY OF SYRACUSE, MAYOR SHARON F. OWENS

April 23, 2026

Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of the State of New York
NYS Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Majority Leader
New York State Senate Legislative Office Building
Room 907
Albany, NY 12247

Honorable Carl Heastie, Speaker
New York State Assembly Legislative Office Building
Room 932 Albany, NY 12248

RE: Addressing New York State's Affordability Crisis with Rental Assistance

To Governor Kathy Hochul, Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, and Speaker Carl Heastie:

We know that, as budget negotiations continue, many considerations are on the table regarding how best to address the affordability crisis for New Yorkers. We urge you to consider the ways the crisis impacts the most vulnerable communities in the state, by increasing access to the Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP). We are grateful to see the program reach implementation in our communities and cities. The rental assistance distributed through this program is already allowing New Yorkers across the state to find permanent, stable homes – we have seen formerly homeless families in Syracuse find permanent housing as a result of this type of support. It is immediately stabilizing and transformational for families.

However, without increased funding for the program, the vouchers cannot go nearly as far as we need. In the crises exacerbated by federal cuts, feasible solutions are scarce for people in search of affordable housing, and many are at risk of losing the housing they have. We must contend with the vast scale of the problem in Syracuse and across New York State:

- Syracuse experienced one of the largest rent increases in the nation – 24% - in 2024, and record housing instability with evictions and forced mobility;
- Our Syracuse City School District has reported record numbers of children eligible for McKinney Vento services, and the impact on attendance and performance has been chilling;
- Of all tenants statewide, 46% are rent burdened and 20% are severely rent burdened– one unplanned event away from becoming homeless themselves.

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To address chronic homelessness, and stop the cycle before it begins, there must be resources to prevent evictions and supply pathways to stable, permanent housing.

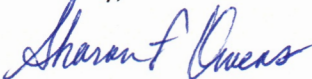
Clearly, the affordability crisis is felt by low-income people in our cities, and the uncertainty is acute for hundreds of thousands of households. HAVP is a solution that helps, but with just under 2,000 vouchers allocated from the \$50M budget, we miss an opportunity to do more. For example, Westchester County reported 1,611 people experiencing homelessness as of the most recent Point-in-Time Count, but can only distribute 78 vouchers with the current budget allocation. The pilot is a strong strategy that will, unfortunately, be unable to meet the immense and urgent needs across the state without a larger investment.

Particularly in municipalities with limited resources, greater access to rental assistance is a crucial piece of the puzzle. While building more affordable and supportive housing is a necessary step for these communities, it should be coupled with increased investment in rental assistance to holistically address the problem. Cities upstate need the additional tools to address the interconnected crises of affordability, homelessness, and eviction.

As Mayors, striving to support struggling and low-income households, I ask you to take the needs of our cities and the entire state into account, by including \$250M for the Housing Access Voucher Program in this year's budget.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Sharon F. Owens
Mayor