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## **Policy Analysis Brief**

### **Goal Statement:**

For my Political Brief, I have chosen to address the topic of “Housing and Homelessness” in order to influence and educate those on the struggles of this ongoing crisis. The three main goals of the “National End Homeless Act” are to first prevent episodes of homelessness especially for individuals and families. The second goal is to assist those who are eligible to receive health and social services. Lastly, their goal is to empower our state and community organizations in order to improve their response to those who are experiencing homelessness. “Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE). “Strategic Action Plan on Homelessness.” *HHS.gov*, 5 Aug. 2022, around 2-3 million individuals in the United States experience homelessness and at least 800,000 people are homeless in the U.S on any regular evening. Most of these families include individuals, families who have young kids, and even runaway and homeless youth. The goal of ending homelessness would require permanent housing combined along with the variety of services that are supported by programs and organizations operated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). In fact, HHS has even created a “Strategic Action Plan on Homelessness' ' in order to regulate strategies and goals that can lead the Department’s ideas which are relevant to homelessness. The reason for this new plan is to refine the goals and strategies and reflect the changing set of challenges/priorities even after development of the first plan. There are four primary goals HHS has presented as a more organized step by step structure. Goal One is to prevent occurrences of homelessness (including individuals and families) within

the HHS clientele. Goal Two provides assistance to those who are eligible and to help them receive health and social services. Strategies of Goal Three works to empower our partners and state on improving their decision making responses toward those who are suffering through struggles of not having a home. Goal Four arrives to create an approach in tracking the development progress in order to prevent and reduce the amount of homelessness. Strategies affiliated with Goal One first begin with identifying risk and protective factors which can prevent the number of these occurrences. This can also reduce the amount of episodes for those who have already been through the system. Developing, testing, and advertising the use of evidence based homelessness prevention as well as strategies and intervention programs can greatly assist. Strategies that can help with Goal Two include outreach in helping those who already are eligible to receive both health and social services. This also improves their eligibility and review process as well as observing new ways to maintain programs provided. Examining how HHS programs operate and address conflicts can improve the outlook of the services. Goal Three of empowering our state and community partners can be explored by working along with the state, governors, county officials, organizations, and more in order to maintain a focus on policy and examine further options to find services. This can resolve multiple conflicts and help to create more guidelines, outreach, enrollment, and delivery of service. Proper training and technical assistance on chronic homelessness is needed for service providers for the community and state. Lastly, approaches that can assist with Goal Four include exploring inventory data collected by HHS and programs participants are involved in. Establishing baseline data on the population of homeless, exploring strategies to keep track of improved access to HHS, and coordinating their data activities comparing it to other federal data can all contribute to preventing an increase of the homeless population.

### **Scope of the problem:**

After reviewing statistics from “Causes of Youth Homelessness.” *Breaktime*,

[https://www.breaktime.org/problem?gclid=Cj0KCQjwz6ShBhCMARIsAH9A0qXI04OfMDZon eRs5U4sym-ZzddJqjtB0ZjJ3zTCvPBy8-I8EOvIGUYaAp\\_VEALw\\_wcB](https://www.breaktime.org/problem?gclid=Cj0KCQjwz6ShBhCMARIsAH9A0qXI04OfMDZon eRs5U4sym-ZzddJqjtB0ZjJ3zTCvPBy8-I8EOvIGUYaAp_VEALw_wcB).

I have learned more in depth of the root of the problem as to what causes homelessness. Studies show 1 in 10 people experience homelessness and young adults in the U.S from the ages of 18-24 experience this within a year span. There are many reasons that can lead up to this whether the individual expects this or not or is even prepared. A few of these reasons are neglect, being kicked out, being part of the foster care system, poverty, abuse, and more. Studies also show that 1 in 10 young adults are disassociated from work or school which greatly disadvantages them in life. Struggles of getting an education, keeping a job (or even getting one), keeping up with bills/rent/kids (if they have any), and some people have to juggle all these conflicts at once on a daily basis. This causes an excruciating amount of stress on a person making it common for them to “lose it all” including their homes. A major reason contributing to this is lack of employment. Not having employment means not having money to afford rent. Granted the government can provide rent checks and other financial assistance to those who do qualify but the resources often don’t last and is rarely enough to cover for even basic needs especially for larger populated families. Since rent expenses are at an all time high, people often end up living in family and homeless shelters or hotels that have been converted into shelter homes due to shelter buildings being overcrowded as it is. About 75% of youth who experience homelessness are unemployed. While there are jobs always hiring, it isn’t so easy to “just get a job” as many make it seem. A few reasons for unemployment is having a lack of work experience or large non-working gaps in one's resume. Employers can be strict upon who they hire so inexperience or lack of work ethic

may cause those applicants to get overlooked. Difficulties in transportation or even not having an address can also hinder an applicant's consideration. Depending on where that person lives can make it complicated to travel to work or not having a permanent address may cause delays/rejection within the job application process. Personal and economic challenges, discrimination, and exclusion can all contribute to the applicants status. Information from "The Full Scope of Homelessness." *Changing Laws, Changing Lives*, <http://homelessnesslaw.org/2012/05/the-full-scope-of-homelessness/>. gives us even more insight to these contributions to the causes of homelessness such as disability benefits and domestic violence. "The definition of homelessness also has implications for advocacy." Housing resources will be stretched even thinner if this definition is expanded. We need to acknowledge the entire scope of this crisis and advocate to increase resources that will assist in reducing experiences of encountering homelessness. Resources need to be further created, improved in development, and overall needs must be met in order for progress to take place. Each contributing factor that can cause a person to experience being homeless needs to be acknowledged, addressed, and must sort through each issue with genuine consideration of pros and cons. There are all kinds of contributing conflicts and all kinds of people of a variety of age ranges that are being drastically affected which makes their situations so much more critical. This "broadens the coalition of potential advocates." Advertising campaigns can assist to build an expanded coalition of supporters which can help to create more solutions in regards to addressing homelessness. The community can unite together to contribute and make experiences at least a bit more easier to manage by providing an efficient system. A change in law can change lives; it takes the right advocacy to be the voices of reason in contributing to change. Improvement in resources, having enough funds, population control, and personal situations may

affect one's journey in finding and affording housing placement but there are resources to help through these obstacles. Addressing the root of the problem and working through each contributing issue effectively can help us to abolish occurrences of homelessness slowly but surely and will work to expand its services especially toward families and children in need overtime.

### **Past Policy:**

“Housing Policy in New York City: A Brief History” can be found in *Housing Policy in New York City: A Brief History - Furman Center*.

[https://furmancenter.org/files/publications/AHistoryofHousingPolicycombined0601\\_000.pdf](https://furmancenter.org/files/publications/AHistoryofHousingPolicycombined0601_000.pdf).

New York City's housing policies are definitely distinctive. No other state has these critical housing conditions as severe as New York does. Rent regulation continues to persist, Public housing is much needed, and the government has to provide funds to assess the needs of all classes. Ever since the 1970's the city has lost over 800,000 residents. In 1979 New York City took ownership through tax foreclosure of more than 60,000 units in buildings that were empty and 400,000 units in both occupied and semi-occupied buildings. Around the 1980's rent and housing prices began to rise as the amount of people experiencing homelessness became more consistent. The Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) quickly became “the second largest landlord in the city” and the NYC Housing authority was the largest public housing country in the U.S. City officials were under a lot of pressure to provide housing for those in need as the numbers increased. Around 1981 they provided a decree that set out health and safety regulations for the state and city shelters to meet. Shortly after, similar rights were

provided to women/families and cutbacks in federal subsidies reduced resources that had historically been available to use in regards to providing housing. In 1985 the city's "Ten year plan for housing" was introduced. This plan was originally a five year and \$4.4 billion dollar program to reconstruct roughly 100,000 housing units for a variety of classes. Three years later the plan was extended to 10 years which increased financial obligations up to \$5.1 billion raising the number of units to around 252,000. Funds from this program would come from rent revenues, the city's Housing Development Corporation, and from both federal and state sources. The intent was to assist the shortage of affordable housing in New York City and focusing on addressing neighborhood revitalization. "We're creating more than just apartments- we're recreating neighborhoods. We're revitalizing parts of the city that over the past two decades have been decimated by disinvestment, abandonment, and arson."- (New York City- Department of Housing Preservation and Development 1989). This plan actually extended to 15 years and HPD went to nonprofit and for-profit developers to partake in development concerning rental projects and to manage housing. The involvement of local financial organizations and intermediaries were in crucial need since they provided both financial and technical assistance. Most of these programs addressed the owners of occupied units and provided loans for upgrading and renovation services. Much of the programs also provided subsidies for further construction ideas in the making which was to build affordable homes. The "New Homes Program of the New York City Housing Partnership " was created to increase the affordable housing stock and further develop them for the better; they became the largest housing program. Throughout the "Ten Year Plan" that was organized, the city had virtually rehabilitated all of its "in rem" buildings as well as developed virtually in unoccupied land. The Ten Year plan had the greatest impact of success as it targeted preservation and revitalization in the community. They thoroughly worked along

with local institutions, were dedicated to commitment, and even helped to repopulate neighborhoods that were previously devastated during the 1970s. With all the progress that has been made overtime, the challenge comes in when it comes to preserving the critical resources that were created. Market conditions today are strong and not like how it was back then. The city would have to work efficiently and proactively in order to educate borrowers and help them to avoid loans they may not be able to pay back. Programs that were created through the Ten Year program succeeded in housing a large population of diverse households, brought back vitality to neighborhoods, and preserved these accomplishments as they worked hard to create even more housing. “The city has been proven to be a pioneer in housing policy in the past; today's challenges once again call for innovative strategies and approaches.”

### **Current Policy:**

A new current policy regarding homelessness was presented by Mayor Eric Adams in 2022 Rascoe, Ayesha, and Caroline Lewis. “A New Policy in New York City Makes It Easier for Homeless People to Be Forcibly Hospitalized.” *NPR*, NPR, 4 Dec. 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/12/04/1140630177/a-new-policy-in-new-york-city-makes-it-easier-for-homeless-people-to-be-forcibly>. This new policy would make it easier for those who are suffering from mental illness to forcibly be taken to the hospital. This would ensure for police officers and street outreach workers to transport a person to the hospital for psychiatric evaluation if they seem mentally unstable or as a danger/threat. “Sweeps of homeless encampments” are being conducted as teams of clinicians and officers have been participating in outreach to homeless living in subways and on the streets to offer them services or transport

them to a better area. Most of the homeless living on the streets don't have access to the same services as the homeless living in the shelters if they aren't going back to a shelter themselves or part of any agency/organizations that can help them. Many homeless living on the streets or subways have mental disorders and there have been rising incidents of innocent citizens suffering from random attacks such as being physically abused, raped, pushed into tracks, etc. Mayor Adams is trying to prevent these instances from occurring by decreasing the amount of homeless population in the streets. While there are concerns about "Violating people's civil liberties" Adams does have a backing from the state regarding this policy. I agree that while these new policies may seem harsh, it does seem necessary in certain cases to ensure further protection and prevent crime attacks from occurring. I worked for the New York shelters for about five years and I recall when I worked in a mens shelter in the Bronx many of them were mentally unstable, often threatened to get physical with the security guards and staff, and we were not armed with any weapons or protection. A 911 call wouldn't exactly protect us but telling the clients when they would behave out of hand "If you don't calm down you're going to the hospital" actually usually worked a lot of the time and they would calm down. Much of the time they just wanted to create a ruckus but they knew they didn't want to end up being taken to the hospital if they could control their behavior. A lot of the time we had to call anyway, but it did ensure safety among the staff and other clients living in the shelter. I support Mayor Adam's decision on this to ensure further safety, especially with the high spike in crime rates these past few years. Since both Housing and Homelessness have been pressing issues in New York City, our city's current policies reflect a complex set of challenges in need of a multifaceted approach. An estimate of 60,000 thousand individuals experience homelessness on any given night and the city has implemented several policies over the years to help address these issues. Some of these policies

include increasing funding for homeless services, building more supportive housing, and implementing a rental assistance program for homeless families. However, these policies have not been able to keep up with the increasing demand for affordable housing as homelessness continues to be a significant issue especially in the city. One of New York City's most recent efforts to address the housing crisis is the "Housing New York 2.0 plan" Gannon, Devin, and Michelle Cohen. "NYC May Set aside at Least 15 Percent of New Apartments for Homeless New Yorkers." *6sqft*, 13 Dec. 2019, <https://www.6sqft.com/tag/housing-new-york-2-0/>.

This program aims to create 300,000 new and affordable housing units by 2026. This plan includes a range of strategies such as increasing the use of city-owned land for affordable housing, providing tax incentives for developers who build affordable housing, and expanding the city's supportive housing program. The Housing New York 2.0 plan has been successful in creating new affordable units, however the pace of construction has been a slow process which delays development. This presses into the issue because the demand for affordable housing continues to outstrip supply. Another policy the city has implemented in the housing crisis is the "Rent Guidelines Board." *Rent Guidelines Board*, <https://rentguidelinesboard.cityofnewyork.us/>.

This intends to set annual rent increases for rent stabilized apartments. The board's decisions have a significant impact in regards to the affordability of housing for both low and moderate income New York residents. Although there has been backlash that the board's decisions have not been keeping up with the rising cost of living in the city and that the rent increases allowed by the board have been too high. In addition to these policies, the city has implemented several other programs to provide assistance to homeless individuals and families. The Homebase program was created to provide eviction prevention services and the Journey Home program was developed to provide rental assistance and case management services to homeless families.

These programs and organizations have assisted many individuals and families avoid or exit homelessness, however they do need further improvement in keeping pace with the increasing demand for services desperately needed. “Homelessness Prevention.” *Homebase - HRA*, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/hra/help/homebase.page>.

### **Proposed Solutions:**

New York City faces significant challenges when it comes to housing and homelessness, especially the rise within housing costs that have made it increasingly difficult for many residents to keep up with. Homelessness is a persistent problem that leaves thousands of individuals and families living in shelters or even in the streets. Lack of affordable housing is one of the most pressing challenges of New York City as it has one of the highest median rents in the county with many residents who are spending a disproportionate amount of their income toward housing finances. Many advocates have been calling for an expansion of affordable housing programs to help resolve this issue. One proposed solution includes increasing the number of units available through the city’s affordable housing lottery. This program includes both low and middle income residents with an opportunity to rent or own a home at below market rates. Expanding this program could help more residents to access affordable housing and reduce strain on their finances. Another suggested solution is to increase rent stabilization laws. New York currently has rent stabilization laws that limit rent increases for tenants in certain buildings, however these laws have not kept pace with rising housing costs. The people have been calling for stronger rent stabilization laws that will make it more difficult for landlords to raise rent and evict tenants. This can provide greater stability for renters and allow them to stay in their homes

and avoid displacement due to rising costs. Homelessness is another conflict in which the population continues to rise despite efforts to address the problem. One proposed solution is to increase funding for homeless services. This can include expanding shelter capacity, providing more funding to outreach programs, and increasing funding for mental health and substance abuse treatment programs. If more resources can be provided the city could assist more individuals and families to find stable housing and avoid homelessness. Advocates are also calling for a more holistic approach such as providing more affordable housing options, addressing the root of homelessness such as poverty, unemployment, and mental illness. “Federal Funding for Homelessness Programs.” *National Alliance to End Homelessness*, 11 Jan. 2023, <https://endhomelessness.org/ending-homelessness/policy/federal-funding-homelessness-program>

### **Involvement of Local Communities**

Local communities have played a vital role in addressing issues of housing and homelessness through their involvement in various initiatives and programs. One example of their involvement is through the establishment of community based organizations (also known as CBOs). These organizations work directly with local residents and community leaders in order to develop strategies and programs that address specific needs of their community. One example is that CBOs may work to provide supportive housing, rental assistance, and case management services for individuals who are experiencing homelessness. Local communities have also played a role in advocating for policies and legislation that support affordable housing and homelessness prevention. Organizing and lobbying efforts community members have been able to strive for increased funding for affordable housing initiatives and supportive services for individuals who

are homeless. Another example of how local communities have been involved is through volunteering and advocacy. Many community members have even provided direct support to individuals experiencing homelessness. There are good samaritans who take it upon themselves to offer them food, clothes, hygiene kits, and other essential needs they may find useful. Many people volunteer at local shelters, churches, food banks, or by donating goods and resources. Organizing community fundraisers to support household initiatives have also been resourceful. Raising public awareness through education and awareness campaigns helps to inform the public on the causes and effects of homelessness. Local communities can help to reduce the stigma and negative attitudes associated with homelessness. This also assists to increase public support for policies and programs that can address homelessness and affordable housing. Furthermore, the involvement of local communities is essential in addressing this conflict as population increases especially in New York. Through the help of community based organizations, volunteering, advocacy, and education, local residents can unite together in order to develop effective strategies and initiatives that can support affordable housing and homelessness prevention. Although challenges of housing can be significant, the collective effort of local communities can make a great difference within the lives of those who are most in need.

### **Involvement of Faith Community**

The faith community has played a vital role in addressing homelessness and housing issues in the city. The faith community includes people of various religions, beliefs, and dominations which include Christian's, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, and more. These communities have a long history of advocating for social Justice and working to address issues of poverty, housing,

and homelessness. Faith based organizations have been very effective in providing housing and support services to all classes of people in New York. One example is the “Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing.” They consist of over religious and civic organizations in New York City that work together in order to advocate for affordable housing and to provide support services to those who are suffering with homelessness. This assembly has been great especially in advocating for policies that also support affordable housing assistance. They also help to create more supportive housing units and the preservation of existing affordable housing. Many faith based organizations in New York also provide direct services toward the homeless by doing outreach in public and areas where the needy can be found. “The Bowery Mission” is a Christian organization that provides meals, shelter, and other support services to people in need in the city. Their organization also offers job training and other beneficial programs to assist individuals to transition out of homelessness and into more stable and affordable housing. In addition to providing direct services, faith based organizations in New York City have been involved in advocacy efforts to address the root causes of homelessness. “New York City Catholic Charities” has been an advocate for policies that provide support for affordable housing and has even provided funding for affordable housing projects. “The Union Theological Seminary” has also been involved within advocacy efforts, hosting events, and providing resources to educate the public regarding issues related to housing and homelessness. My favorite faith based organization is the church I attend Sunset Park Community Church located in Sunset park. Here we actively participate in feeding the homeless, providing for the needy, doing outreach within the community as well as teaming up with other churches, and spreading the love, positivity, and gospel of God. The involvement of the faith based community is critical and these organizations bring a unique perspective and deep commitment to social justice that can help to address the

root of causes. By advocating for policies that support affordable housing, provide direct services to those who need it most, and educate the public on these issues to help address the housing crisis.

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