



Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness
for Women and their Children

Testimony of Win (formerly Women In Need) for the NYC Council General Welfare Committee Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget Hearing

Thank you for the opportunity to present Win's feedback on Mayor Adams' Preliminary Budget. Win provides safe, dignified shelter with the on-site social services that help families break the cycle of homelessness, including case management, support for housing searches, employment and income building programs, and mental health support from licensed social workers. In total, we served more than 9,000 individuals last year. As the largest provider of shelter for homeless families and children, Win is concerned about the current state of our housing market, which is testing the city's families at this very moment. The economic fallout of the pandemic has left tens of thousands of New Yorkers unable to pay their rent, and now with the expiration of the eviction moratoriums and rents soaring in New York at double the national rate, the city must take steps respond to the surge in homelessness that is taking shape. We urge the City Council to take the first step by including policies and investments in the Fiscal Year 2023 city budget that will move the needle on homelessness.

First, the City Council must oppose the proposed headcount reduction to the Department of Social Services (DSS) and to the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD). The coming increase in need for families must be met with increased resources, not with reductions. Personnel cuts at DSS will further hamstring the agency's ability to respond quickly and competently with the programs and services New Yorkers need to stay in their homes and avoid sleeping on the streets. At Win, we know firsthand that delays and administrative errors already plague CityFHEPS, the City's flagship rental assistance program that is key to addressing homelessness. And we know that homeless families with children undergo tremendous hardship and trauma when they attempt to access shelter because the DHS application and eligibility process is abusive and prone to errors.

The proposed personnel cuts will result in longer processing times for applications for rental assistance vouchers and one shot deals, which will result in longer stays for families in shelter and higher likelihood of eviction for families trying to remain in their homes. Just as demand surges, these cuts will reduce the workforce at the already mismanaged intake and shelter application center for families with children. The end result will be more mistakes and worse customer service as rushed, overburdened workers making life altering decisions for families.

Personnel cuts at DSS will also negatively impact the ability of contracted non-profit organizations like Win to provide essential social services. As we prepare to serve the new families that will arrive at our shelters while continuing to support the families already in our shelters, we will need DSS to work quickly to register contracts, approve new needs, and release payment so that we can keep our operations running smoothly. Win already struggles with payment delays that can stretch for months and sometimes years for the services the city contracts with us to provide. Any additional delays will imperil our ability to provide services and to respond nimbly to new and increased needs.