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ADVOCATES APPLAUD PASSAGE OF CITY COUNCIL LEGISLATION TO EXPAND RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS TO BOTH YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS AND YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

New York, NY — Today, the New York City Council passed two pieces of legislation to expand the eligibility criteria for the [CityFHEPS rental assistance program](#) to include runaway and homeless youth and young people aging out of foster care. Intro. 2405 will require the Department of Social Services to count time a young person has spent in runaway and homeless youth shelter services when determining such youth's eligibility for rental assistance, when such eligibility is dependent on having spent time residing in the city shelter system. Intro. 148 would require the Department of Social Services to count time spent in foster care when determining a youth's eligibility for rental assistance. Together, these bills will transform access to permanent housing for thousands of youth experiencing homelessness and youth in foster care across New York City each year.

In response, coalitions, community-based organizations, and youth advocates released the following statements:

"Today is a good day for youth experiencing homelessness and youth transitioning out of foster care in NYC. The passing of Intros. 2405 and 148, is a groundbreaking moment in this city," said **Jamie Powlovich, Executive Director of the Coalition for Homeless Youth**. "For youth experiencing homelessness in the DYCD shelter system, Intro. 2405 solidifies into law an unkept promise this administration made over 5 years ago. Our sincerest thanks to Council Member Levin, who has fought tirelessly for the needs of youth throughout his tenure, and to the rest of the NYC Council for supporting this legislation. Giving youth and young adults in the DYCD runaway and homeless youth system equal

access to lifesaving vouchers will not only have a drastic impact on individual lives, but it will systematically bring us one step closer to ending youth homelessness in this city.”

"We commend the Council for passing Intros. 2405 and 148, which expand eligibility for CityFHEPS to young people experiencing homelessness and youth transitioning out of foster care," said **Theresa Moser of The Legal Aid Society's Juvenile Rights Practice**. "Our clients have waited many years to obtain access to City rental assistance and we are proud to have worked with young leaders, Council Member Levin, and other advocates to ensure the promise of meaningful permanent housing access became a reality."

"The Fair Futures Youth Advisory Board (YAB) applauds the City Council for passing this critical legislation, which, coupled with coaching and academic support, will provide the housing support and stability that we need to transition out of foster care and become successful adults. We know firsthand that exiting foster care and navigating the adult world presents many complex challenges, but none are more daunting than finding affordable, stable housing in NYC," said **Ericka Francois, Fair Futures Youth Coordinator**. "Sadly, youth in foster care are especially vulnerable and more likely to experience homelessness than their peers, who often have a network of support to rely on. Fortunately, this legislation provides a path to decent and affordable housing, which we know will transform the lives of countless youth in foster care. Access to housing is a basic human need, and these vouchers will serve as a lifeline as we enter the next stage of our lives. We thank the City Council and everyone who has advocated and worked endlessly to help the City take this vital step forward in combating youth homelessness."

"Stable and affordable housing is a basic necessity for any human being, but especially for youth in care who have limited resources. When we establish safe and reliable housing for youth who have foster care backgrounds we help them to heal from childhood wounds of abandonment. We are helping them to self-correct and live fulfilling lives," said **Dylan Tatom, Former Fostering Youth Success Alliance (FYSA) Youth Advocate**. "With this bill, we help them to open up new opportunities and pivot in a new direction. We are assisting them to break through barriers and take them from where they are now to where they need to be in the future so that they have a fighting chance in society. I'm incredibly pleased to see the Council take this step to support young people with a foster care background find the stability they deserve." In this moment, I'm reminded of Mahatma Gandhi's quote, 'The true measure in any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members.'"

"This expansion of CityFHEPS eligibility is an excellent decision," said **Kathleen Brady-Stepien, President and CEO of the Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies**. "Whether they have a history of foster care or are otherwise homeless, we know young adults are particularly vulnerable and in need of support. Intervening early with rental assistance gives young adults the stability needed when they are starting out, and will likely keep them from needing the adult shelter system later on. Our thanks to the Council for the help this gives the young people in our agencies' programs."

“For far too long, New York City’s most vulnerable young people have been denied basic rental assistance unless they spend additional time in the adult homeless shelter system -- on top of years they may have already spent in the youth shelter system. Now, with the help of a CityFHEPS voucher, it will be easier for thousands each year to secure a safe, stable, and affordable home to help them grow and thrive,” said **Michelle Yanche, Executive Director of Good Shepherd Services**. “Today is a victory for youth experiencing homelessness and youth in foster care across the city, and for all of us working to support their success. We applaud and thank the City Council for their leadership -- especially Council Members Levin, Rose, Lander, and all of the bills’ co-sponsors -- for working to ensure that the needs of youth experiencing homelessness and aging out of foster care are a priority. The passage of this legislation moves us closer to ending youth homelessness and providing a safe and stable home for young adults aging out of foster care. We are grateful for the tireless work of all who made this moment possible.”

"Sheltering Arms is proud to be one of the many organizations who never stopped advocating for New York City's homeless youth and youth in foster care," said **Elizabeth McCarthy, CEO of Sheltering Arms**. "This legislation addresses what was a glaring gap in the system and is a major step toward ending youth homelessness in New York City. While there is a lot of work left to do, we are emboldened by the Council's decision to continue that work for those we serve."

“Our young people experiencing homelessness at Covenant House New York desperately need access to affordable and sustainable housing. Why should youth be denied housing vouchers simply because they chose to receive services through a city agency that specializes in developmentally appropriate services for their age group? This change in law will enable our youth to have a major pathway toward achieving housing stability,” said **Nancy Downing, Executive Director Covenant House New York**.

“The CityFHEPS vouchers enable young people to be one significant step closer to stability while expanding the housing options and neighborhoods available to youth transitioning out of foster care as well as other vulnerable youth,” said **Kimberly (Kym) Watson, President and CEO of Graham Windham**. “We extend our gratitude to those that made it possible, especially to our youth who are advocating tirelessly for the coaching and housing supports they need to thrive.”

“The Ali Forney Center applauds the passing of Intro 2405 and Intro 148 which supports our mission of reducing harm to LGBTQ+ youth by no longer requiring them to go into DHS shelter where they could face transphobia and homophobia, to obtain access to housing vouchers. The current pathway for vouchers is set up in such a way that is harmful to LGBTQ+ youth. We need to support the youth towards independent living without further traumatizing them,” said **Troy Philadelphia, Director of Outreach and Advocacy, The Ali Forney Center**.

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About the [Coalition for Homeless Youth](#)

The Coalition for Homeless Youth is a consortium of over 60 agencies working to improve the lives of runaway, homeless and street-involved youth across New York State. We work to recognize and uphold the plight of homelessness among young people across ethnicities, genders and orientations.

About the [Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies](#)

The Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA) is the principal representative for nearly all the not-for-profit organizations providing foster care, adoption, family preservation, and juvenile justice services in New York State. COFCCA comprises over 100 member organizations, ranging in size from small community based programs to the nation's largest multi-services agencies — all of which share the mission of serving children and families. COFCCA works with its members and government to ensure quality services for children and their families.

About [Fair Futures Youth Advisory Board](#)

The Fair Futures Youth Advisory Board is dedicated to advocating for New York City's foster youth in providing them with the necessary supports they deserve. As a coalition of 100+ organizations, Fair Futures Youth Advisory Board (YAB) consists of current and former foster youth with strong voices who advocate for public funding for all NYC foster care youth. The Fair Futures Coalition consists of child welfare agencies, non-profits, foundations, advocates and young adults working to ensure we fulfill our promise to New York City's foster youth.

About [Good Shepherd Services](#)

Good Shepherd Services goes where children, youth, and families face the greatest challenges and provides resources that build on their inherent strengths to help them thrive. Good Shepherd operates over 80 programs which help nearly 30,000 youth and family members in struggling neighborhoods throughout New York City. All programs are united by a common goal – to create opportunities that help our participants succeed at school, at home, and in their community.

About [The Legal Aid Society](#)

The Legal Aid Society exists for one simple yet powerful reason: to ensure that New Yorkers are not denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. For 145 years, we have protected, defended, and advocated for those who have struggled in silence for far too long. Every day, in every borough, The Legal Aid Society changes the lives of our clients and helps improve our communities.

About [Sheltering Arms Children and Family Services](#)

At Sheltering Arms, our goal is to foster a society where every child and family we serve will have the opportunity to succeed and thrive. We address the effects of social inequity in the most challenged communities in New York City. Our innovative programs and compassionate

services measurably enhance the education, well-being, and development of children, their families, and communities. We have maintained an unwavering commitment to our mission for nearly 200 years.

About [The Fostering Youth Success Alliance Youth Advocate Program](#)

The Fostering Youth Success Alliance (FYSA) Youth Advocate Program aims to center the voices of young people with a foster care background in setting FYSA's policy agenda and direction. FYSA is a statewide advocacy group that promotes responsive policy and programs to improve the socioeconomic, physical and mental health, housing, and educational outcomes for youth in and aging out of foster care. The alliance is comprised of concerned providers, activists, and youth who are committed to securing stabilizing supports that empower youth across New York to overcome barriers and excel in life. FYSA is housed at Children's Aid, a multi-service human services organization located in New York City.

About [Covenant House New York](#)

Covenant House provides housing and supportive services to youth facing homelessness. We help young people transform their lives and put them on a path to independence.

About [Graham Windham](#)

In full partnership with families and communities, Graham Windham strives to make a life-altering difference with children, youth and families who are overcoming some of life's most difficult challenges and obstacles, by helping to build a strong foundation for life: a safe, loving, permanent family and the opportunity and preparation to thrive in school and in the world.

About [Ali Forney Center](#)

The Ali Forney Center was founded in 2002 in memory of Ali Forney, a homeless gender-nonconforming youth who was forced to live on the streets, where they were tragically murdered. Committed to saving the lives of LGBTQ+ young people, our mission is to protect them from the harms of homelessness and empower them with the tools needed to live independently.