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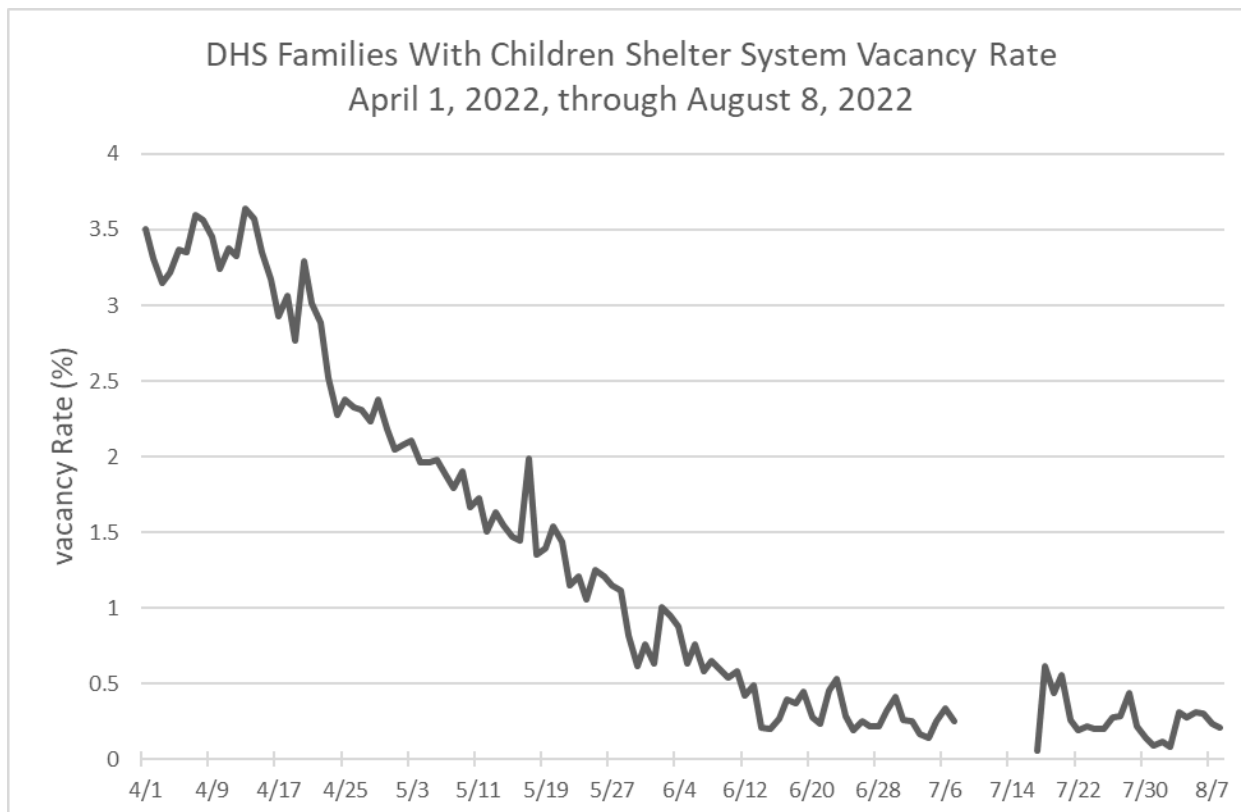
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The Coalition for the Homeless and The Legal Aid Society Demand Answers on the Surge in Shelter Applications, Call for Adequate Capacity

Advocates Also Call on the City to Prioritize Increasing Affordable Housing Development Throughout the Five Boroughs

NEW YORK, NY - August 9, 2022 – Today, The Legal Aid Society, the Coalition for the Homeless, and elected officials gathered on the steps of City Hall ahead of the New York City Council’s oversight hearing on the longstanding issues with the shelter intake process for homeless families, to demand answers from the City on its plan to address the surge in applications and need for adequate shelter capacity.

This comes after Mayor Adams’ unsupported claims that recent increases in the shelter census are due primarily to an influx of asylum seekers. This perpetuates dangerous misinformation and misunderstandings about the true sources of mass homelessness in New York City, and it deflects responsibility from the City and State – especially as the current surge in the need for shelter beds was entirely predictable.



Source: Department of Homeless Services (DHS has not reported data for July 8, 2022, through July 16, 2022)

Nevertheless, the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS) was woefully unprepared and failed to secure enough shelter capacity to meet the current need. The City has long known that there is increased demand for shelters for families with children during the summer months – a surge that has been exacerbated by the post-moratorium increase in evictions this year and the shortage of lawyers to represent tenants in Housing Court, as COVID-19-focused protections for tenants end.

Though Mayor Adams has announced an emergency declaration to rapidly procure additional shelter beds and other services for people seeking asylum, advocates called on Mayor Adams to release specifics around his plan for incoming asylum seekers, as well as for all those who have lost their homes for economic and other reasons.

“The City has a moral and legal obligation to ensure that everyone, including asylum-seeking families, are able to obtain shelter,” said **Adriene Holder, chief attorney of the Civil Practice at The Legal Aid Society**. “Until enough affordable housing exists to transition these New Yorkers to a permanent home, the City must comply with the law and a court order by bolstering the stock of available beds. We’ll continue to work with the City and monitor progress, and The Legal Aid Society lauds the City Council for holding this important hearing at such a critical moment.”

“It’s time for the City to get serious and implement concrete solutions that address these failures,” said **Taysha Milagros Clark, policy and data analyst with Coalition for the Homeless**. “Scapegoating and playing fast and loose with the facts helps no one. We need to move beyond platitudes and false promises to action and meaningful investments. The City must provide decent and appropriate shelters for *everyone* in need while actively working to prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place – period. We thank the City Council for working to ensure that the most vulnerable among us are not denied the help they need and are entitled to.”

The Legal Aid Society and the Coalition for the Homeless’ testimony includes key steps that the City and State can take to immediately address the growing crisis, such as:

Ensure Proper Capacity Planning:

- DHS leadership agrees that the vacancy rate for each shelter system should never fall below 5 percent in order to ensure that every homeless person receives an appropriate and accessible placement that meets their needs.

Significantly Increase Investments in Affordable Housing:

- In order to address the root cause of the crisis, the City must radically increase its investment in deeply subsidized, affordable housing to create at least 6,000 new apartments per year for homeless households and an additional 6,000 new apartments per year for households with extremely low incomes.

Help People Move Out of Shelters:

- For the shelter census to decrease, people need to exit shelters more quickly than people enter them. In order to have timely shelter exits, the City needs to both invest in permanent, affordable housing, and ensure that there is sufficient staff capacity to process housing packages and fight against source of income (SOI) discrimination.

Expansion of Subsidies:

- As noted in The Legal Aid Society’s testimony to the Council’s Committee on Housing and Buildings from July 1, 2022, the City should implement the following action items to expand access to housing subsidies:
 - Streamline the CityFHEPS review process.
 - Set clear benchmarks for approving CityFHEPS packages.
 - Re-train shelter staff.
 - Approve apartments that pass inspections.
 - Reevaluate the three-month shelter requirement.

- Extend CityFHEPS vouchers.
- Waive the work requirements for people who receive public assistance.
- Provide vouchers to those without eligible immigration status.
- Eliminate the utility deduction to allow tenants to rent apartments at FMR.
- Eliminate the rent reasonableness requirement to ensure tenants are not unfairly prevented from renting apartments at or below FMR.

Help Pass “Good Cause” Eviction Legislation:

- Protecting unregulated tenancies from record-breaking rent hikes and unwarranted evictions is crucial to preventing more New Yorkers from becoming homeless as evictions continue to rise in the wake of the end of the statewide eviction moratorium earlier this year.

Support New Arrivals to NYC:

- To support new arrivals to NYC, the City must connect people to resources including food, economic support, interpretation and translation services, and legal counsel.

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