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**\*\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\*\***

## ***Ahead of City Council Hearing on CityFHEPS, Legal Aid and Coalition for the Homeless Call for Needed Reforms to Aid New Yorkers Facing Eviction or Already Experiencing Homelessness***

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society and the Coalition for the Homeless – ahead of a [City Council hearing](#) on the City Fighting Homelessness and Eviction Prevention Supplement (CityFHEPS), a local rental assistance program – called for sweeping reforms to the subsidy to aid thousands of low-income New York City families currently experiencing homelessness or who are on the brink of losing their homes.

The reforms proposed by Legal Aid and the Coalition would expand eligibility to the CityFHEPS program to help more New Yorkers move into affordable housing and create parity between the CityFHEPS program and the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program (commonly known as the Federal “Section 8” program).

“Amid an unprecedented housing and homelessness crisis, the City must adopt these desperately needed reforms to help CityFHEPS reach its full potential of helping thousands of low-income families access safe and affordable housing,” said **Judith Goldiner, attorney-in-charge of the Civil Law Reform Unit at The Legal Aid Society**. “These proposed changes will have an immediate impact, keeping families safely housed, off the street and out of the burgeoning local shelter system. The Legal Aid Society thanks the City Council for holding this critical hearing at a time when so many of our clients need this fundamental relief.”

“Given that there are more people sleeping in shelters tonight than at any time since the City started keeping count, it’s imperative that the City do everything in its power to help New Yorkers without homes find a way into decent permanent housing,” said **Coalition for the Homeless Executive Director Dave Giffen**. “We are happy to see the City Council focusing on this very important issue as we head into the new year.”

Specifically, Legal Aid and The Coalition called for the implementation of the following reforms:

- **Utility allowance:** CityFHEPS tenants should receive a credit off their portion of the rent to help meet utility costs, consistent with Section 8 rules. Households with additional income may rent an apartment at or above the payment standard but should never pay more than 40 percent of income toward rent and utilities combined. Tenants whose rental portion is calculated at less than the utility allowance and those whose sole source of income is public assistance should qualify for a Utility Assistance Payment.

- **Expand CityFHEPS to all non-citizens, regardless of immigration status:** The City should expand CityFHEPS eligibility to all New Yorkers regardless of immigration status and discontinue penalties to mixed-status households by offering a full subsidy to these families.
- **Expand CityFHEPS eligibility to rent-burdened households headed by elderly and disabled New Yorkers living in the community:** The City should expand CityFHEPS eligibility and provide, at minimum, 5,000 vouchers to rent-burdened elderly and disabled households who reside in rent-regulated apartments in the community.
- **Eliminate the arbitrary 90-day rule:** Currently, the City requires that homeless families reside in shelter for 90 days before they can apply for CityFHEPS. This requirement is both punitive and arbitrary, and the City must eliminate it so families who enter the shelter system can immediately apply for CityFHEPS to secure housing.
- **Address administrative delays:** The City must take measures to expedite and streamline the process for approving and processing CityFHEPS packages.
- **Adopt the Exception Payment Standard:** The City should publish all payment standards, the highest rent the City would potentially approve for a lease, in advance of January 1st and never approve levels below those set by the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD). Legal Aid has urged HRA to adopt the Exception Payment Standard used by HPD and the Emergency Housing Voucher program that allows a higher subsidy to enable tenants to move to neighborhoods with greater opportunities.

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*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 over 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. [www.legalaidnyc.org](http://www.legalaidnyc.org)*

*The Coalition for the Homeless is the nation's oldest advocacy and direct service organization helping homeless individuals and families. We believe that affordable housing, sufficient food and the chance to work for a living wage are fundamental rights in a civilized society. Since our inception in 1981, the Coalition has worked through litigation, public education and direct services to ensure that these goals are realized. [www.https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/](https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/)*