



May 25, 2023

Contact:

Alejandra Lopez
The Legal Aid Society
ailopez@legal-aid.org

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

***Legal Aid Lauds NYC Council for Passing Needed Legislation
to Reform and Expand CityFHEPS***

***Bill Package Will Protect Thousands of New Yorkers from
Homelessness, Helping them Access and Maintain Housing***

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society lauded the New York City Council for passing a package of bills that will reform and expand the City Fighting Homelessness and Eviction Prevention Supplement (CityFHEPS) program, a local housing voucher program for families and individuals experiencing or on the brink of homelessness.

“CityFHEPS, a proven voucher program, has long required reform, and this package of legislation will expand eligibility for thousands of New Yorkers, providing them with the means to secure safe, affordable and long-term housing,” said **Judith Goldiner, attorney-in-charge of the Civil Law Reform Unit at The Legal Aid Society**. “The Legal Aid Society lauds the City Council for passing these reforms and we urge Mayor Adams to enact them into law immediately. We also thank our CityFHEPS coalition partners, Community Service Society, Make the Road NY, Vocal NY, and Neighbors Together, for their zealous advocacy.”

The legislative package includes:

- [Intro 878](#) ends the “90 day rule” which has long forced people to enter the shelter system and remain there for three months before even being eligible for CityFHEPS. This rule takes a particularly severe toll on families with young children whose lives are doubly disrupted from repeated moves.

- [Intro 893](#) would remove certain criteria that the New York City Department of Social Services (DSS) currently uses to determine whether a household that is neither living in shelter nor experiencing street homelessness is eligible for a CityFHEPS rental assistance voucher, increasing New Yorkers’ access to secure safe, long-term and affordable housing.
- [Intro 894](#) removes the CityFHEPS work requirement and expands eligibility by increasing the income threshold.
- [Intro 229](#) corrects an error in how the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) calculates "utility allowances," by ensuring tenants have money to pay their utilities. Currently, when utilities are not included in the rent, HRA subtracts money from the total approvable rent but does not credit tenants with any money to pay utilities. This bill will help tenants pay utility bills for electricity, gas, heat, and hot water.

According to a recent [report](#) from the City, it costs local taxpayers around \$8,773 per month to house a family of two in the shelter system in 2022. Alternatively, a CityFHEPS voucher for a 1-bedroom apartment to house a family of the same composition would cost a maximum of \$2,387. A recent [study](#) by Women In Need (WIN) found that ending the “90-day rule” could save the City up to \$27,990 per family.

Moreover, per the [Community Service Society](#), it would cost the City \$3 billion dollars for the 90 days the City mandates that homeless individuals spend in shelter before even beginning the process to access rental assistance. Since households typically spend much longer than that in shelters — over 500 days, on average — the tab to the city would be a staggering \$17.6 billion. Providing vouchers to tenants to prevent eviction would cost the City \$237 million per year, saving taxpayers a significant amount.

###

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