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HELPING OUR PEOPLE EXCEL

A Plan to Turn the Tide of New York City's Homeless Crisis.

Paid for by Nicole for New York City

THE MANDATE

New York City is the only big city in America that has “the right to shelter,” which means that we have a court mandate in place requiring that we provide families with children, and individuals, temporary emergency housing when they have no other housing option.

This means that New York City must always have capacity in place, by law, to meet the demand. For the past three decades, NYC has struggled through multiple lawsuits regarding the rules governing the system. These same advocates, who have sued the city, are now the very people who are running the shelter system.

To comply with the mandate, the City must ensure there is capacity for everyone who comes to the door at all times. To meet this goal, the City must routinely project how many people will enter and exit the system over the course of the year. Therefore, there is an open RFP process, so that shelters can be built to accommodate these projections, and quickly, so that no family is without a proper placement. This process does not require any community input or ULURP process – shelters can legally be built anywhere, at anytime with no approvals. With this in mind, it is critical to manage flow in and out of the system, and use entry policies, as well as prevention and diversion tools, so that shelters are built based on data, and only when absolutely necessary.

THE FACTS

According to the *Coalition for the Homeless*, homelessness in New York City has reached “the highest levels since the Great Depression of the 1930s” with over 61,277 homeless individuals. The number of homeless New Yorkers sleeping each night in municipal shelters is now 47% more than it was ten years ago, and a 20% increase since Mayor de Blasio has taken office.

According to the Independent Budget Office, the number of homeless children in our public school system rose by 15% during de Blasio’s first year in office, reaching nearly 33,000 in the 2015-16 school year.

THE PROBLEM

This year’s budget for the Department of Homeless Services is \$1,775,043,042.00. Unfortunately, no amount of money will be enough to stabilize the crisis without a workable plan.

Steve Banks, the person who had been suing the city for 20 years over how it handled its homeless population, is now in charge of Human Resources Administration and has created a mega-agency, unraveling criteria and requirements.

Since the de Blasio administration stopped forecasting the number of people in need of shelter, they could not plan for capacity. They relaxed eligibility rules which allowed formerly ineligible applicants to begin flooding the system. People were no longer removed from shelters due to bad behavior and they have been less proactive in transitioning homeless people out of the shelters and onto a path of independent living – instead people were allowed to become dependent and remain dependent on the city for their housing.

THE MALLIOTAKIS PLAN

We may never solve the problem of homelessness, but we can reduce it by identifying problems that can lead to a family becoming homeless and implementing preventive measures.

Increase Affordable Housing Options:

Free Up Space in New York Public Housing – provide incentives for singles or couples who occupy multi bedroom apartments within the New York City Housing Authority to downsize to smaller apartments. Incentives include moving costs and 20% rent reduction (currently a person occupying a NYCHA apartment pays 30% of their income no matter the size of the apartment. The average tenant spends 20 years in NYCHA. Families with children, who have reached adulthood and moved out, remain in their large apartments because they have no incentive to downsize. This results in approximately 1/5 of NYCHA apartments being under occupied.

Work with Governor to sign a “New York/New York IV Agreement” – create 30,000 supportive housing units in New York City to reduce our record homeless population, relieve our reliance on shelters, and save taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars in avoidable expenses. In the first five years of the “NY/NY III Agreement”, signed in 2005, chronic homelessness among adults was reduced by 47%.

Create an At-Risk Rent Subsidy – provide a rent subsidy for working at risk families who agree to job retraining in order to secure a position that will elevate their income level. This 36-month program will demand an annual recertification and require that the children of any recipients attend school.

Create Permanent Assisted Housing for Those with Severe Health Conditions

– Work with non-profits to create permanent supportive housing for homeless individuals with severe health conditions. Individuals will receive on-site mental and physical health care. The non-profit will be audited annually for client retention and success.

Prohibit the Use of Hotels as Shelters – Hotels are inappropriate for families because they lack a kitchen. Strictly prohibit the use of hotel rooms as shelter for more than 7 days.

Address Underlying Issues:

Create a Domestic Abuse Relocation Program – 26% of shelter residences are victims of domestic violence. It is the number one reason for entering the shelter system. We should provide public assistance benefits to families fleeing an abusive family member. Mandatory psychiatric assessment/support and job training program. This 60-month program will demand an annual recertification and require that the children of any recipients attend school.

Direct Homeless Individuals Suffering From Addiction Toward Rehab and Sober Living – We should provide individuals with an option to enter 30 Day detox followed by a 180 day stay at a sober living facility where s/he can learn how to live without the use of drugs or alcohol. Providing people with the skills to live sober will help that person stay sober.

Establish Pop-up Walk-in Intake Centers – In order to make services available to those who need them most, we will establish pop-up intake centers that will be open 24-hours to assist homeless families and individuals to ensure they receive the help they need. These centers will include a case worker, a psychiatrist, a drug addiction specialists, teen counselor, family counselor and physician to help establish a plan toward future self-sufficiency.

Increase Opportunities for Assistance – Establish an interagency Homeless Outreach Task Force comprised of NYPD, Sanitation, the Department of Homeless Services, MTA, New York City Transit, Parks, the Department of Transportation, and the Human Resources Administration to search for street homeless and provide them with the services they need. This unit will escort individuals to 24-hour pop-up intake centers so they can be evaluated and provided services to address their underlying issues. The pop-up centers will be located in areas experiencing a high volume of street homeless. Encampments will be removed and cleaned to discourage others from utilizing the space.

Representatives of various agencies will meet monthly until street homelessness is eliminated.

Establish and Maintain Firm Requirements – Establishing requirements within the law will ensure that the service is targeted to the people who the system is designed for. Those seeking shelter shall be truly in need of service and have no other housing option such as family, whether in New York or out of state. Families who are provided emergency shelter services must have a clear path for community re-entry through education, job training and mental health assistance if necessary.

Enforce Behavioral Standards – Shelters are temporary, but they should also be safe. Those who demonstrate anti-social behavior will be removed to a medical facility where they can receive the psychiatric help they need.

Require Enrollment in the Work Experience Program for Those Who Are Able – providing an individual with the opportunity for employment gives them a healthy sense of purpose and prepares them for a successful and fulfilling life. I will work with local unions to create apprenticeship opportunities across various areas of employment and require apprenticeships with developers who receive tax incentives, to provide those who can work with the skills they need to remain employed.

Implement Performance Evaluations for Non-Profits – There are a multitude of non-profit organizations in New York City whose mission is to support people in need of shelter. Funding for these entities will be tied to success rate. Annual audits will be conducted and funding will be elevated or decreased in accordance with the success of the program. Those programs found deficient will not be funded in the following year.

Develop Accurate Projections and Planning – By utilizing available public benefit data we will create accurate homeless projections so that my administration can plan shelter capacity and add beds where needed.

Allow the NYPD to Enforce the Law – Loitering, littering, public urination and other quality of life laws will be regularly enforced to send a message to those who resist help and treatment that their behavior is socially unacceptable.