



**Testimony to the  
New York City Council on the  
Mayor's FY 2011 Executive Budget  
June 7, 2010**

Good day. My name is Nicole Branca. I am the Policy Director at the Supportive Housing Network of New York. The Network represents over 190 nonprofit agencies that develop, operate, and provide services in over 42,000 supportive housing apartments throughout New York State.

Supportive housing, permanent affordable housing linked to on-site services, is the proven, cost effective and humane way to provide stable homes to individuals and families who have often had great difficulty remaining housed. The people we house and serve – people with mental illness, HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, physical disabilities and other barriers to independence – are typically frequent users of expensive emergency services like shelters, hospitals, prisons and psychiatric centers. Because placement into supportive housing has been proven to reduce use of these services, supportive housing saves more money than it costs to build, operate and provide services in the housing. In NYC, there are over 26,000 formerly homeless, disabled and low-income tenants living in supportive housing including 4,400 tenants living with HIV/AIDS.

**Fund Case Management in HIV/AIDS Supportive Housing**

I am here today because our members and tenants are concerned about a budget cut in the Mayor's FY2011 Executive Budget, a \$1.876 million reduction to onsite, contracted case managers in HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA) funded supportive housing. This cut was originally proposed in last year's Executive Budget but was restored for FY'10 by the City Council. This year's Executive Budget returns to the new, reduced baseline from last year, so the cut needs to once again be restored by the Council, even though it does not appear as a PEG this year. On behalf of the 4,400 tenants who rely on their onsite case managers and the 45 nonprofits that employ

them, we urge the City Council to restore this critical funding stream again for FY'11.

If this cut goes through, each case manager would go from assisting 20 of the most challenging tenants served in supportive housing, to 30 or more, a 50% increase. Case managers put the support in supportive housing, and eliminating their presence will have serious consequences. The interventions of case managers working on-site in supportive housing are essential to the success of tenants living with HIV/AIDS, most of whom have multiple disabilities, including mental illness and substance abuse. Cutting on-site case managers will result in many more HASA tenants losing their housing and relying on much more costly emergency shelter programs and hospitals.

I would also like to address the \$4.193 million PEG (Program to Eliminate the Gap) being proposed in this year's budget that would eliminate through attrition 248 City caseworker positions at HASA. Commissioner Doar has testified that this PEG will take the place of the aforementioned budget cut to nonprofit on-site case managers and add that \$1.876 million back to the baseline budget for HASA. This proposal has caused a significant amount of confusion. To help clarify the distinction between HASA caseworkers and on-site nonprofit case managers, we have developed and are enclosing with our testimony a fact sheet on these two different positions.

The conundrum this proposal presents is that, for supportive housing tenants, it is more important to have on-site case managers who have constant contact with tenants and are available at all hours a day. However, caseworkers at HASA play a critical role in the stability and well being of the 27,000 HASA clients that do not live in supportive housing.

We support the Administration's decision to fund on-site, contracted nonprofit case managers. We agree that certain changes could be enacted that would make HASA caseworkers that serve supportive housing tenants more efficient (such as assigning one HASA caseworker to clusters of tenants of a single nonprofit provider). We do not know whether HASA has the capacity to reduce staff and maintain sufficient support for their clients. To that end, we ask that City Council accept the Administration's proposal to save supportive housing contracted caseworkers, but restore as much of the \$4.193 as possible to minimize headcount reductions at HRA that would have an adverse impact on services to clients.

### **Fully match State allocation to SRO Support Services**

The Network continues to work with state legislators to include restorations to SRO Support Services in the final State budget. The SRO Support Services program requires the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS) to match the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) dollar for dollar to fund this budget line, which helps nonprofits pay for case management, front-desk security and other essential services that keep formerly homeless, disabled individuals stably housed. As we speak, providers are mailing layoff notices in response to a 17% cut, but we are still hopeful that we will achieve some restorations at the State level. If we do, we have assurances from the DHS Commissioner that the City will match the level of SRO Support Services funding provided by the State. If the program is fully restored in the final State budget, we anticipate that the City's share will be \$11.97 million for FY 2011. We ask that the City Council ensure that the administration meets its commitment to fund its match requirement if the State restores funding to SRO Support Services above the level in the Governor's Executive Budget.

Thanks for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions.

*Respectfully submitted by:*

*Nicole Branca*

*Director of Policy*

*Supportive Housing Network of New York*

*247 West 37th Street, 18th Floor*

*New York, New York 10018*

*646-619-9642*

*[nbranca@shnny.org](mailto:nbranca@shnny.org)*