

Testimony of Brendan Cheney, New York Housing Conference

**New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings
Hearing on “Housing Our Neighbors”: A First Look at the Mayor’s Housing Plan**

July 1, 2022

Good afternoon. My name is Brendan Cheney. I am Director of Policy and Communications at the New York Housing Conference (NYHC). I would like to thank Committee Chair Pierina Sanchez as well as the other members of the City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings for the opportunity to testify about Mayor Eric Adams’s new housing plan – [Housing Our Neighbors](#).

NYHC is a nonprofit affordable housing policy and advocacy organization. We also led [United for Housing](#), a coalition of more than 90 organizations that developed consensus recommendations to address the housing and homelessness crisis.

Mayor Eric Adams's new people-focused housing plan – Housing Our Neighbors: A Blueprint for Housing and Homelessness – is a welcome departure from the City’s previously siloed approach to housing policy. This new vision rightly centers on some of the most critical and pressing housing issues across the five boroughs, including NYCHA preservation, homelessness, and housing affordability – one of the main recommendations of the United for Housing coalition.

The plan also rightly avoids setting a big numerical target for affordable housing production, which in the past has led to housing plans that chased the big number at the expense of affordability levels and other important goals. However, we want to make sure the administration continues to track production to maintain transparency and we look forward to working with the administration to develop metrics that will track whether the plan is efficient and improving housing affordability.

We also will want to work with the administration on affordability levels of the affordable housing. This is particularly important given the new HUD AMI levels increased by 16 percent over the past year and 34 percent since 2018, with the metro area AMI at \$94,500, well beyond the median income of NYC renters at \$50,000 per year. As the official AMI levels continue to grow beyond actual incomes of New Yorkers, we will need to work together to make sure the affordable housing is affordable to New Yorkers.

Overall there are a lot of good strategies in the plan and we appreciate the administration’s efforts to listen to experts, advocates and especially NYCHA residents and people that have experienced homelessness. We also appreciate that the plan commits to addressing health and safety in housing and administrative burdens that make it harder to build and access affordable housing. Now that they have a plan, the work ahead is implementing the plan and matching it to the resources available.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I am happy to answer any questions.