NEW YORK HOUSING CONFERENCE

Testimony of the New York Housing Conference

New York City Council Committee on Land Use
November 18, 2025

Good afternoon. My name is Brendan Cheney. I am Director of Policy and Operations at the New York Housing Conference (NYHC). I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to testify.

NYHC is a nonprofit affordable housing policy and advocacy organization. As a broad-based coalition, our mission is to advance City, State and Federal policies and funding to support the development and preservation of decent and affordable housing for all New Yorkers.

We are testifying today about the three bills before the committee – Intros. 1433, 1437, and 1443. These bills would regulate HPD's affordable housing production by requiring minimum or maximum housing types in affordable housing, including family-sized apartments, studio apartments in senior housing, and extremely low income and very low income housing.

We support a housing plan that is responsive to community needs for deep affordability, provides a sufficient number of family-sized units and offers flexibility for seniors aging in place but we do not support legislating requirements relating to these issues applied to all projects.

While we understand the Council's desire to fight for these priorities, we believe any such efforts should be addressed in the city's term sheets and not in legislation. Legislating term sheet issues is inappropriate and undermines the flexibility needed at a project level and over the course of a year and prevents responsiveness to local needs from HPD and developers.

In areas with high amounts of affordable housing, local elected officials and communities often ask for homeownership and mixed income projects to prevent concentration of poverty in long term regulatory agreements - this is also a fair housing concern.

We also want to add some context based on current housing needs. The need for affordable housing is greatest for singles. Nearly 250,000 singles are severely rent burdened. Meanwhile, 115,000 families with children are severely rent burdened. When singles have more housing options, there will be less sharing of large apartments by unrelated adults, potentially freeing up more family-sized units.

In addition, it is worth sharing the breakdown of unit size for HPD's new construction over the past 11 1/2 years. Over that time, 28% of units were studios, 39% one-bedrooms, 27% two-bedrooms, 6% three-bedrooms, and less than 1% were four-bedrooms or more.

We support adding more family units especially in areas with high-performing schools to provide housing opportunity. Raj Chetty's research shows benefits for children that move into neighborhoods with lower poverty rates, increase earnings as adults. But again, this should be done through term sheets and other efforts by HPD.

As for senior housing requirements, requiring 1 bedrooms for half of senior housing produced will increase costs or reduce total production. As seniors are selected through the housing lottery, it is not possible for seniors to necessarily select a 1-bedroom apartment. Nor is it likely that at the time of entry, a senior is anticipating a future need for a home health aid. Flexibility should be offered for affordable housing owners to offer tenants suitable transfers within their portfolio as an exemption to current marketing rules.

Finally, legislating deep affordability will also restrict HPD’s flexibility. We support calls for deeper affordability, and appreciate that HPD production included higher levels of deep affordability in recent years. But those efforts should be done through term sheets and HPD policy and not through legislation.

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