

GOVERNOR HOCHUL ANNOUNCES MAJOR STATEWIDE INITIATIVE TO END THE HOMELESSNESS CRISIS AND ADDRESS LONGSTANDING INEQUITIES IN HOUSING

New "Safe Options Support" Initiative Will Deploy Teams In New York City and Other Targeted Areas to Engage with Street Homeless Individuals

Governor Will Also Implement New Policies That Use Public Funding To Expand Housing Access And Protect Tenants From Eviction

Governor Kathy Hochul today announced a major statewide effort to fight the homelessness crisis and address longstanding inequities in the housing market as part of the 2022 State of the State. Governor Hochul will establish Safe Options Support (SOS) teams throughout New York City and in targeted regions throughout the state where street homelessness is most widespread, and use public funds to implement initiatives that expand housing access and protect tenants from eviction.

"No one should sleep on the street anywhere in the State of New York," **Governor Hochul said.** "While the economic devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic has made the homelessness crisis worse, we know there are longstanding structural inequities that need to be addressed in order to provide New Yorkers with stable, healthy homes. I'm committed to helping the New Yorkers who need it most get access to the housing and high-quality care they deserve."

Governor Hochul's housing plan will tackle the systemic inequities that cause housing insecurity and force New Yorkers into homelessness. These initiatives will include:

- **Safe Options Support (SOS) Teams:** Teams of trained mental health practitioners, to be known as Safe Options Support (SOS) teams, will work with emergency shelters, outreach providers, as well as permanent and supportive housing providers, to transition individuals living on the street into stable housing. They will be deployed in New York City, where roughly 3,900 people are living on the streets, as well as other high-need areas of New York State, to provide intensive transition and supportive coordination services to homeless individuals with a history of mental illness, substance use disorder, or other identified risk factors that place them at higher risk for recurrent shelter, hospital, and prison admissions. The State-run SOS teams will collaborate and coordinate with New York City-run first-line outreach teams, as well as the New York City Department of Social Services, to engage individuals experiencing street homelessness to help secure placement into emergency or supportive housing programs with wraparound social services. These teams will expand the current scope of work performed by "Critical Time Intervention teams," as well as increase the scale of this expanded scope, both in New York City and across the state.

- **Ending the 421-a tax abatement and establishing a new, more effective program:** As the 421-a program is set to expire in 2022, Governor Hochul will propose a new tax abatement that incentivizes rental housing construction across New York City while creating permanent and deeper affordability. Governor Hochul's proposed new tax abatement will aim to create deeper affordability that services lower income households than 421-a; create longer term affordability to provide more stability for low income households; ensure long-term availability of affordable rental units in neighborhoods across the City; restructure the tax abatement to ensure maximum efficiency of taxpayer dollars; align with City and State climate goals by requiring carbon neutral technologies, electrification and electrification-ready building systems; allow flexibility to enable construction of financially viable smaller buildings; and create an all-affordable homeownership option to promote low- and moderate-income homeownership opportunities across the City.
- **Improving housing access for renters involved in the criminal justice system or with negative credit history:** Governor Hochul will propose two pieces of legislation to prevent discrimination on the basis of credit score or interactions with the criminal justice system. One new law will prohibit residential landlords from automatically denying applicants with poor credit history, assuming the applicant can demonstrate recent financial security. The other will eliminate a private landlord's ability to automatically reject individuals with justice involvement and will require housing providers to conduct individualized assessments that account for the circumstances of a conviction and evidence of rehabilitation while still ensuring the safety and welfare of existing residents.
- **Creating an eviction prevention legal assistance program:** Governor Hochul will create the Eviction Prevention Legal Assistance Program, which will provide legal assistance to upstate renters who cannot afford counsel in eviction proceedings. The funding would apply to renters facing eviction with incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty line and would be provided by local legal service providers, such as the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York, Legal Services of Central New York, LAW-NY and other organizations. This initiative will also expand the Fair Housing Testing program to provide additional fair housing testing and education throughout the state.
- **Creating a permanent disaster recovery and resiliency unit for home rebuilding:** Governor Hochul will create the New York State Disaster Recovery and Resiliency Unit, to be housed in the department of Housing and Community Renewal (HCR), to permanently facilitate administration of federal funds to meet recovery needs efficiently. This will replace the Governor's Office of Storm Relief (GOSR), a department funded by federal funding that is set to expire soon. The unit's core focus will include scaling recovery efforts and

coordinating resiliency initiatives for both major and small disasters throughout the State; coordinating initial response and long-term recovery not covered by FEMA or State emergency response agencies; identifying needs, deploying resources quickly and equitably, and tracking funding to all agencies after a storm; building online applications using GOSR's expertise in data management; and managing a portfolio of pre- and post-disaster programs, particularly those focused on homeowner rebuilding efforts, resiliency upgrades for homeowners and communities, and voluntary buyout sites.

- **Addressing poverty to prevent homelessness**

statewide: Governor Hochul recognizes that the current structure of Public Assistance (PA) does not provide sufficient incentives for households to increase earnings and savings, as needed to provide housing stability. To address this, New York will change eligibility thresholds, permit households to exempt more income before it reduces the PA benefit and permit households to save more before savings render them ineligible for PA. Additionally, New York will eliminate the 45-day waiting period of Safety Net Assistance (SNA) benefits to ensure eligible individuals quickly receive the necessary basic income supports that so many New Yorkers rely on, including individuals transitioning back to their communities from incarceration.