



**Testimony Of Steven Banks, Commissioner**

**The New York City Human Resources Administration**

**Before the New York City Council Finance Committee and General Welfare Committee**

**Fiscal Year 2016 Executive Budget**

**May 19, 2015**

I would like to thank the City Council's Finance Committee and General Welfare Committee as well as Chairs Julissa Ferreras and Stephen Levin for giving us this opportunity to testify today about HRA's budget and our continued progress toward reform of our policies and procedures.

My name is Steven Banks and I am the Commissioner of the New York City Human Resources Administration. Joining me today are HRA's Chief Program Planning and Financial Management Officer Ellen Levine, HRA's Executive Deputy Commissioner for Finance Erin Villari, and HRA's Chief of Staff Jennifer Yeaw.

HRA is proud to be in the forefront of the de Blasio's Administration's efforts to address poverty and income inequality. The Fiscal Year 2016 budget reflects these priorities as we reaffirm our commitment to reforming our policies and procedures to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of our programs as we work to better serve low-income and vulnerable New Yorkers.

HRA serves approximately 3 million low-income New Yorkers through a broad range of programs and we have spent this past year reforming key areas within the agency to ensure that we are:

- Helping working families stay in the workforce when their jobs do not pay enough to live on by providing supports such as food aid and cash assistance, public health insurance, and emergency cash assistance and eviction prevention services.
- Aiding those struggling to return to or enter the workforce by providing a variety of employment-related services, including access to education and job skills training, help with job search and placement, and temporary cash assistance.
- Providing a safety net for those permanently or temporarily unable to work.

Today, rather than go through all of the reforms that are underway, we will highlight some key reforms, especially milestones since our last testimony at the Preliminary Budget hearing in March.

## **KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

### **EMPLOYMENT**

One of our top priorities is providing clients with the opportunity to develop the skills and training to leave public assistance permanently. As we have reported previously, without a high school education, you are lucky to earn \$20,000. With a high school diploma or equivalent, your earning ability increases to \$30,000 or more. With some college, it increases to \$40,000 or more. Since 60% of employable clients on HRA's caseload lack a high school diploma, the importance of providing the opportunity to gain a high school or college level education is clear.

We have further reported that our goal is to move away from a one-size-fits-all model that resulted in too many clients returning to public assistance rather than successfully starting careers.

In the employment area, we can report the following:

- By the beginning of June we will be issuing concept papers to start the RFP process for new employment and training programs, which we hope to have in place by early next year.
- Meanwhile, we have already converted 500 CUNY WEP slots into work study positions, which will increase the ability of students to successfully complete their studies.
- As part of moving away from the prior one-size-fits-all model, HRA is developing an RFP for a program within our existing budget to enhance employment services for people with HIV who are eligible for HRA's assistance through our HASA program or our new Employment Plan.
- Based on a change in State law, the training policy revision to allow four-year college enrollment was announced in late July of 2014, with the first enrollments submitted in August. As a result of this reform, currently 1,271 clients are enrolled in four-year college.

### **ACCESS TO FEDERAL BENEFITS TO FIGHT HUNGER**

Together with the Mayor's Office of Operations, and with assistance from DOITT, HRA launched a new version of AccessNYC, the website where New Yorkers can go to find out if they qualify for more than 30 different benefits. This new, improved website, which is accessible in English and the six Local Law languages, will be the basis for many improvements for HRA clients. The immediate advantage is it is now possible to both apply and recertify for SNAP/food stamps online. And there is much more to come.

Historically, submitting documents to HRA has been a problem for both our clients and our staff because documents were often lost and the process added unnecessary transactions that created staff workload problems. We responded to these concerns and now it much easier to submit documents using scanners in our officers and at community organizations. More importantly, beginning later this month SNAP/food stamps clients will be able to start to submit documents using a smart phone as we begin to roll out new technology during the calendar year.

As part of the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety, HRA now has in-person outreach capacity in all 15 NYCHA developments that are targeted as part of that program. In addition, we will be partnering with NYCHA to reach residents at these developments who qualify for but are not using SNAP/food stamps.

Last month, we also began a major campaign to find people who qualify for SNAP/food stamps but are not using them. While close to 80% of eligible New Yorkers and 97% of eligible children are signed up for SNAP/food stamps, only 68% of eligible seniors and immigrant adults are. We hope you have seen our ads, which feature actual clients, in the subways, bus shelters, check cashing stores, laundromats, bodegas, hair salons and barbershops around the City. More than 1,000 people a day have been going to the website that is part of the campaign to increase access

to SNAP/food stamps, which directs people to AccessNYC so they can find out if they qualify and then sign up. We have materials available and would welcome the assistance of Councilmembers in helping spread the word.

## **PREVENTING AND ALLEVIATING HOMELESSNESS**

Homelessness is a major barrier to the stability that helps children succeed in school and adults find work and build a career. HRA has been a partner with the Department of Homeless Services in a major initiative to prevent and reduce homelessness.

Since last September, the City has been developing rental assistance programs to keep people in their homes and help them move out of shelters. The latest program is City FEPS. It is modeled on the state Family Eviction Prevention Supplement (FEPS) program, but the rent levels are increased to the Section 8 range that landlords will accept in the current market.

The LINC rental assistance programs got off to a slow start because originally the rent levels that New York State permitted were too low and landlords were resistant because of the bad experience from the sudden end of the Advantage program during the prior Administration. But we raised the rents, provided incentives to landlords, and added new LINC programs with City funds that are aimed at targeted groups. As a result, LINC and our other efforts are starting to produce results. As of May 1, more than 2,000 households – including almost 5,000 children and adults – moved from shelter to housing between December 2014 and April 2015 thanks to LINC. Including Section 8 and NYCHA referrals, a total of more than 4,000 households, with more than 12,000 children and adults, have been moved into homes during the first 10 months of the current fiscal year.

And our new program to have Judges immediately refer tenants at risk of eviction to legal service providers on the spot in the court house has begun in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens, with the roll out in Staten Island to come shortly.

## **PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY AND INTEGRITY**

It is essential that people who qualify for and need benefits receive them. It is as important to ensure that benefits only go to those who do qualify. HRA is constantly working to improve its robust program integrity efforts.

For example, the Brooklyn D.A. recently arrested participants in a massive fraud scheme that offered free sneakers to Medicaid clients in return for submitting to unnecessary treatment. HRA staff were the main undercover operatives gathering evidence to bring down this operation and also staffed the phone taps and provided translations of conversations that exposed this cruel scheme to profit by exploiting our clients.

In addition, *The New York Times* published a story about HRA's increasingly sophisticated use of data mining to root out fraud. Using this technique, HRA has been able to focus its efforts on cases that are most likely to be fraudulent rather than cases that do not have merit.

With these recent achievements since March in mind, we would like to present these highlights from HRA's Executive Budget.

**As of the Executive Budget:** HRA has a Fiscal Year 2016 operating budget of \$9.9 billion (\$7.7 billion in City funds). Seventy-eight percent is for Medicaid and Cash Assistance benefits, with the balance supporting employment programs, homelessness prevention, legal services, rental assistance, and other services for low-income and vulnerable New Yorkers. Additionally, HRA administers \$3 billion in federal SNAP/food stamps that do not pass through the city budget.

Much of the public focus tends to be on the number of people receiving Cash Assistance, but it is important to note that a large number of the New Yorkers receiving assistance from HRA are working and that the benefits administered by HRA support them in remaining in the workforce. For low-income and vulnerable New Yorkers HRA provides critical services including:

- 2.445 million New Yorkers receiving Medicaid through HRA and tens of thousands more through the new State health insurance exchange;
- 1.7 million New Yorkers receiving SNAP food assistance and millions of meals served through food pantries and community kitchens;
- 700,000 New Yorkers receiving home energy assistance every winter;
- 190,000 children assisted through child support income; and
- 100,000 receiving one-time cash assistance grants each year to prevent evictions and utility shutoffs or provide assistance with other emergencies.

As presented in Table 1 in our PowerPoint, HRA benefits and services assist in maintaining employment; these efforts are intended to keep low-income New Yorkers in the workforce, as it is more efficient and less expensive than providing assistance after they are out of the workforce, especially after a prolonged absence. Cash Assistance, food and energy assistance programs, Medicaid, child support, and the Earned-Income Tax Credit all help to support New Yorkers struggling to survive on low paying jobs. In 2014, for example, HRA's Office of Child Support Enforcement collected more than \$742 million on behalf of 190,000 NYC children and nearly all of these collections went directly to families. Additionally, we are making it easier for Non-Custodial Parents to access our child support debt reduction programs which reduced \$12.3 million in child support debt owed to the government in 2014. Finally, parents whose government debt accumulated while earning less than the federal poverty level will have their debt automatically reduced to \$500 for that period.

HRA's homelessness prevention programs, legal services initiatives and rental assistance programs all serve to stabilize families, help individuals avoid losing employment, and provide support in the face of sudden emergencies. We will discuss our caseload in further detail, but it is worth noting that of the nearly 90,000 recipients who are eligible for cash assistance and subject to work requirements, 25,000 have fulltime jobs in which they make so little, they still qualify for public assistance. This is just one of many reasons why the Mayor's leadership in advocating

for raising the minimum wage is so important in the effort to address poverty and income inequality.

Additionally, as presented in Table 2, HRA provides support for vulnerable populations, including adults unable to care for themselves, home care services for seniors and individuals with physical or mental disabilities, support for people with clinically symptomatic HIV and AIDS, shelter and supportive services for families who are survivors of domestic violence, and legal services to address tenant harassment, avert homelessness and assist immigrants. In 2014 more than 7,400 middle and high school students also received counseling as part of HRA's Teen Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (Teen RAPP). Teen RAPP funding in FY'16 is \$3 million, which will fund 22 social workers in schools to support this evidenced-based prevention, intervention and outreach program aimed at teaching students to recognize and change destructive patterns of behavior prior to their transference to adult relationships.

The broad range of programs and services administered by HRA explains the size of our staff and budget. HRA has a 14,439 budgeted headcount in FY'16 paid for with a combination of City, State, and federal funds. These public servants chose to work at HRA assisting low-income and vulnerable New Yorkers in need, many of them dedicating their entire careers to civil service. Just a few weeks ago I had the privilege of speaking at our employee recognition ceremony at DC 37 at which members of our staff were recognized for 25 years of service. HRA has both a diverse workforce and a unionized workforce.

The two pie charts in the PowerPoint we have provided to you each show how the HRA spending is currently estimated to change from year to year.

#### **HRA's Budget:**

- In the Executive Budget, \$28.6 million (\$29.7 million tax levy) and 57 positions were added in 2015. In 2016, the increase was \$162.8 million (\$131 million tax levy) and 328 positions were added.
- The HRA budget as of the Executive Plan totals \$9.9 billion (\$7.66 billion tax levy) in 2015, and is virtually unchanged in 2016, with an increase of .4% (\$33 million) in tax levy funds.
- The tax levy increase is due to:
  - rental assistance increases for additional placements in 2016 compared to 2015;
  - additional legal services including expansion of the anti-harassment initiative;
  - new staff in 2016 to implement reasonable accommodation requirements;
  - growth in the IDNYC program to manage additional applications.
- Total headcount is 14,535 in 2015 and 14,439 in 2016 (City funded headcount is 10,601 increasing to 10,689).

HRA's ten year capital budget is \$191.8 million of which \$137.5 million are City funds:

- \$78.6 million for technology to streamline operations including key investments to Client Benefits Re-engineering;

- \$76.1 million for facilities maintenance, equipment and improvements;
- \$33.9 million for the installation of telecommunications equipment; and
- \$3.2 million for vehicles.

Within our overall budget and staffing levels, we want to describe in greater detail our major initiatives and reforms, including:

- \$32 million (\$18 million City funds) for LINC rental assistance, increased LINC rent levels, Federally funded Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA), City FEPS and related programs.
  - Allows for a combined total of 8,480 move outs in FY'16 through funding for LINC, CityFEPS and Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA).
- \$20 million (increasing to \$36 million in 2017 as the providers ramp up) for anti-harassment legal services and \$4.3 million for related outreach – an increase from the prior Administration which funded an anti-eviction initiative at \$6.4 million that is also increasing to \$13.5 million in FY'16.
- \$5.6 million for additional immigration legal assistance and services to address Executive Action.
- \$51 million for Cash Assistance and \$21.9 million for additional rent arrears (\$58.9 million City funds) to support an average of 360,000 receiving ongoing benefits and 8,600 receiving one-time grants, while maintaining the flat annual caseload of 500,000. The total Cash Assistance budget is \$1.48 billion (\$651 million City funds).
- \$14.8 million (declining to \$7.5 million in 2017) for additional staff and OTPS for the IDNYC municipal identification card program; the projected decline is based on projected future demand following the extraordinary ramping up process this year to meet the current demand. However, if the level of demand remains higher than projected, adjustments can be made on an expedited basis as evidenced by the expedited response to the unprecedented demand this year.
- \$13 million (\$9 million City funds) for reasonable accommodations for clients with disabilities/Lovely H. compliance, including 74 baseline staff, and one-time contractor and consultant costs.
- \$12.3 million (\$4.8 million City funds) for 252 reform positions, including additional call takers, homeless prevention and legal services staff, and HASA case managers.

At the same time, there are significant savings and efficiencies in HRA's 2016 Executive Budget, including:

- Savings of \$21.3 million (\$9.6 million City funds), growing to \$28.5 million (\$12.7 million City funds) in 2017, from reductions in unnecessary and duplicative

administrative functions and positions, which are repurposed to support HRA's new reform staffing and other important operational changes.

- Administrative savings of \$380,000 (\$249,000 City funds) in HASA as a result of a new contract to manage the emergency housing portfolio for homeless clients with HIV/AIDS.
- Improved claiming in 2015 is providing additional one-time revenue from federal fringe benefits, producing City savings of \$72 million.

Changes from the Preliminary Budget for HRA mainly reflect the Administration's comprehensive effort to prevent and alleviate homelessness and focus on the continued provision of consolidated civil legal services, which will be discussed in more detail.

Next, here is a description of HRA's restructuring and streamlining initiatives to increase effectiveness and efficiency.

### **IMPROVING ACCESS TO SNAP/FOOD STAMPS**

During 2014, there were about 1.716 million New York City residents receiving federal SNAP/food stamps, including more than 650,000 children, and they purchased a total of more than \$3 billion in food, generating about \$5.4 billion of economic activity in New York City, largely within small businesses.

The official SNAP participation rate is close to 80% in New York City, which is a relatively high rate. The participation rate among children is approximately 97%, but it is closer to 70% for seniors and immigrant adults. In order to connect more New Yorkers who qualify for these federal benefits we launched a major SNAP/food stamps outreach campaign in April targeting the two largest unenrolled but eligible groups – seniors and immigrants.

The centerpiece of the campaign is a marketing website, [foodhelp.nyc](http://foodhelp.nyc), which includes videos featuring real SNAP clients sharing stories of how the program helped them, links to the newly-redesigned [ACCESS NYC](http://ACCESSNYC) site where people can apply, and an interactive map with the locations of food pantries, community kitchens and in-person SNAP application locations.

In addition to this campaign, HRA is partnering with dozens of community organizations, food pantries and advocates to generate a strong social media outreach effort and gain support for the campaign by leveraging the digital presence of community partners and with specially designed posters and brochures, #SNAPhelps. Outreach materials will be available in English and the six Local Law languages (Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Korean, Arabic, and Haitian Creole).

We have invested in a major effort to make enrollment for federal benefits easier, including ensuring that clients are able to use PCs to submit applications. We are seeking a federal waiver for on-demand SNAP interviews, allowing clients to call at their convenience rather than have to spend hours waiting at home for a worker to call. We are continuing to improve the AccessNYC

website to make it possible not only to apply online, but also recertify. And most recently, we launched a new initiative to enable clients to submit documents using a smart phone.

We are pleased that the Executive budget includes funding to restore the SNAP/food stamps headcount cut by the prior Administration, thereby allowing us to improve services in our centers. The restoration of 515 positions in 2015 and 361 in 2017 will ensure that we have sufficient staff to assist New Yorkers who qualify for federal food assistance to be able to receive it. Overall, beginning in 2015 and continuing in 2016, one of the biggest reforms throughout the agency is enhancing and improving client services and experiences by reducing unnecessary administrative processes and functions. Repurposing \$21.3 million in total funds (\$9.6 million in City funds) and 257 positions in 2016 will allow HRA to more fully support employment, homelessness prevention, legal services, rental assistance, disability accommodations, and other programs.

### **Employment Plan**

HRA's Family Independence Administration (FIA) offers numerous employment programs and services to assist families and individuals improve their economic standing. Through these services – including basic education, training, work experience, job search, placement and retention services – FIA works to not only keep people on the job but improve their employment prospects.

The 12-month, unduplicated number of recipients receiving recurring Cash Assistance is expected to remain stable in 2016 at 500,000 – where it has remained since at least 2008. However, the monthly caseload is projected to fluctuate modestly as we work more aggressively to reach out to families and individuals who need rent arrears benefits to prevent evictions and homelessness, as well as reduce the counterproductive churning of adults and children off and on and off the caseload, which currently subjects HRA to a potential \$10 million New York State penalty for unnecessary fair hearings. A supplemental \$49.9 million in City funds and \$51.5 million in total funds in 2016 will support a monthly average of 360,000 recipients receiving ongoing Cash Assistance benefits.

Of these 360,000 most are not subject to work requirements, according to the same state and federal rules applied by prior Administrations. That is because about half are children and many more are seniors or clients who have barriers to employment because of either permanent or temporary disabilities. Of the approximately 90,000 recipients who are subject to current work requirements, 25,000 have jobs in which they make so little they still qualify for Cash Assistance. Increasing the minimum wage as the Mayor has called for is not only an effective tool to reduce poverty and income inequality, it will reduce our caseload as well.

As reported at our Preliminary Budget hearing, the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance approved our new Employment Plan on December 31<sup>st</sup> of last year. We currently spend approximately \$200 million a year on employment programs and under the

newly approved plan we are changing the way we provide services to enhance effectiveness. We are moving away from a one-size-fits-all approach and moving towards improved and individualized assessments with an emphasis on education, training, and employment-related services with a goal of long-term sustainability. As part of our plan, we are focused on eliminating unnecessary punitive and duplicative actions. Our goal is to reduce the number of preventable and inappropriate negative outcomes that trigger unnecessary fair hearings that subject us to a potential \$10 million State penalty, thereby allowing staff and service providers to focus on client needs and increase effective problem solving. As a result, we expect clients will avoid delays in accessing services, finding jobs, and moving to sustainable, long-term employment.

As mentioned earlier, we are developing an RFP within our existing budget to enhance employment services for New Yorkers with HIV who are eligible for HASA, and clients with HIV who are not eligible for HASA services will be able to receive employment services through our new Employment Plan. Shortly, we will issue a concept paper seeking proposals for new vendor contracts to further implement the Employment Plan, which will enable us to continue our progress on phasing out WEP.

### **PREVENTING AND ALLEVIATING HOMELESSNESS**

HRA's Homelessness Prevention Administration is a critical part of the de Blasio Administration's effort to reduce homelessness and oversees HRA's expansion of homelessness prevention services through program coordination and new prevention initiatives.

As part of HRA's overall strategy to streamline programs and root out inefficiencies and duplicative efforts, HPA includes the following:

- Homelessness Diversion Units (HDUs) located at all HRA Job Centers and at DHS' PATH facility are now utilizing new diversion tools that include short-term financial support.
- HRA is now deploying on-site staff at DHS Homebase offices around the City and at the NYCHA administrative hearings office, in addition to staff at the Housing Courts.
- There is an Early Intervention Outreach Team (EIOT) for outreach to families and individuals in need of legal assistance or emergency rental assistance based on early warning referrals from the Housing Court.
- Landlords are essential to fighting homelessness, so we created the Landlord Ombudsman Services Unit (LOSU) to address the needs and concerns of landlords and management companies that provide permanent housing for families and individuals receiving public assistance.
- The Rental Assistance Program implements various LINC initiatives and City FEPS.
- The Legal Assistance Initiatives Program manages HRA's consolidated legal assistance programs

HRA also recently created the Family Independence Administration's Central Rent Processing Unit to centrally process, issue and deliver emergency rental assistance payments to landlords to prevent evictions.

## **LEGAL SERVICES**

Our prevention efforts include a variety of legal services programs that have been consolidated at HRA, further adding to more streamlined and efficient services for the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

As we reported previously, the Administration has consolidated legal services from DHS, HPD, CJC, DYCD, and DFTA at HRA in order to enhance coordination and effectiveness. Contracted baselined legal services include: anti-eviction, anti-harassment tenant protection, immigration, securing federal disability benefits, and services for seniors. We are also developing a study of the unmet needs in Housing Court to evaluate what programs will be most effective in preventing evictions and homelessness.

The de Blasio Administration has made an unprecedented commitment to fund legal services for vulnerable New Yorkers with \$49.2 million allocated in HRA's FY'16 budget, growing to \$65.2 million in 2017.

For example, HRA received funding in the February plan to begin to implement an Anti-Harassment Tenant Protection Program targeted towards residents currently living in six neighborhoods identified for rezoning. HRA's Anti-Harassment Tenant Protection Program received \$5 million in City funds in 2015, increasing to \$20 million in 2016 and \$36 million in the baseline as the providers fully implement the services, with an additional \$4.3 million for outreach to inform residents of the upcoming changes and ensure they are aware of their legal rights. The goals of this program include preventing tenant harassment and displacement, keeping families and individuals in their homes, maintaining affordable housing, and stabilizing neighborhoods. HRA is preparing an RFP and will have new contracts in place by the Fall of 2015.

The Executive Budget also adds \$5.6 million to HRA's budget for immigrant legal assistance and services related to Executive Action for New Yorkers seeking to adjust their immigration status.

This anti-harassment tenant protection and immigration funding is in addition to the \$23.6 million in the 2016 baseline for legal services: \$13.5 million for anti-eviction services, including programs consolidated at HRA during FY'15 and funds added in the November Plan to increase the prior Administration's program from \$6.4 million to \$13.5 million; \$5.4 million for immigration related legal services; \$2.1 million for civil legal services for seniors; and \$2.6 million for legal services to secure federal disability benefits.

Finally, as you know, in 2015 HRA is overseeing \$18.2 million in funding added by the City Council during the Adopted Budget process for legal services for the working poor, family reunification immigration defense, the unaccompanied minors immigration initiative, assistance for domestic violence survivors and veterans, citywide legal services, and anti-eviction and SRO legal services.

### **LINC, CITY FEPS AND OTHER RENTAL ASSISTANCE AND SERVICES**

In partnership with DHS, we manage new rental assistance and prevention programs targeted to homeless families and individuals residing in DHS shelters and HRA-run domestic violence facilities. From December 2014 through April 2015, we have seen progress in regard to LINC move outs because, together with DHS, we were able to quickly adjust the programs to meet the real needs of families and their potential landlords.

Working closely with DHS, we continue to improve the LINC rental assistance program to make it more effective. Since the program's creation, we have added three additional LINC programs and now there are a total of six unique LINC programs for homeless New Yorkers. The six LINC programs for homeless New Yorkers in the shelter system are:

- LINC I: Rental Assistance for working families;
- LINC II: Rental Assistance for families with multiple shelter system stays over a period of time and multi-system involvement;
- LINC III: Rental Assistance for survivors of domestic violence;
- LINC IV: Rental Assistance for seniors and for adults receiving Supplemental Security Income, Social Security Disability, or veterans disability benefits;
- LINC V: Rental Assistance for working adults; and
- LINC VI: Rental Assistance for families with children already in shelter who exit to live with relatives or friends.

Total funding for LINC rental assistance is \$88.2 million (\$63.9 City million tax levy) in FY'16. This funding reflects a higher rent level in the Section 8 range to make the program more appealing to landlords and effective for our clients who are competing for market rate apartments. Funded at \$7.2 million in total and City funds in 2016 and \$13.1 million in total and City funds in 2017, the program provides rental assistance at the 2014 US Department of Housing and Urban Development fair market rent levels. The Executive Budget adds \$2.1 million in City funds beginning in 2016, increasing to \$18.5 million (\$20.5 million City) in 2017 and \$52.9 million (\$53.8 million City) in 2018 for continuation of the existing LINC programs and for the new LINC VI. The Executive Budget supports a projected 6,355 new LINC placements in 2016, in addition to the nearly 2,000 move outs in 2015.

An additional \$1.6 million in total funds (\$1.3 million in City funds) was added to fund LINC Aftercare services in 2016 and beyond. This LINC Aftercare includes services for the especially vulnerable families at risk for shelter entry and programs aimed at stabilizing LINC clients once they move to permanent housing.

The LINC Landlord Campaign is funded at \$1.0 million in total and City funds in FY'15 and \$2.7 million in total and City funds in FY'16 for a grass-roots campaign to identify apartments that can be rented to provide access to affordable housing for homeless families and adults.

Last month, HRA and DHS implemented a new rental assistance and homelessness prevention program called CityFEPS. It is modeled on the state Family Eviction Prevention Supplement (FEPS) program, but the rent levels are increased to the Section 8 range that landlords will accept in the current market. CityFEPS Rental Assistance funds a single cohort of 1,000 families, which assumes 125 families will move into or retain housing in FY'15 and the remaining balance of 875 will move into or retain housing in FY'16 with some attrition. CityFEPS is funded at \$578,000 in total funds and \$173,000 in tax levy in FY'15 and \$8.5 million in total funds and \$2.5 million in tax levy in FY'16, with \$12 million in total funds and \$3.6 million in City funds in FY'17.

Other rental assistance programs to prevent and alleviate homelessness include HRA's program to provide support to families who are able to find housing on their own after leaving DHS's shelter intake process. This is funded at \$1.5 million in total and City funds in FY'16.

Finally, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development has allocated \$20 million of its Federal HOME grant to HRA for a Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) program. Our new HOME-funded TBRA Program will provide assistance to 1,250 households that are either currently residing in shelter or are chronically street homeless. Eligible households will have at least one child or adult in receipt of federal Supplemental Security Income or Social Security benefits. This is funded at \$10.8 million in total funds, including \$590,000 in City funds for inspections in FY'16; and it increases to \$18.5 million in 2017.

### **HASA CLIENT SERVICES**

As of March 2015, HRA serves 32,309 medically eligible individuals through HASA programs and services. To enhance services and meet our obligation to provide emergency housing for all who are eligible for HASA services, we are planning a HASA-specific master contract through which we will obtain and maintain emergency housing and administer placements at a cost of \$1.7 million in FY'16 and \$2.3 in the baseline. And as discussed earlier, we are developing an RFP to enhance employment services for people with HIV who are eligible through our HASA program or our new Employment Plan.

### **IDNYC**

Through the collaboration with the Mayor's Office of Operations and the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, we continue to implement and serve as the "back office" for the IDNYC municipal ID card program. The entire IDNYC infrastructure, including the front-facing enrollment staff as well as the back-end review staff and all equipment, sits within HRA. This is why the whole of the IDNYC budget is in HRA. HRA's support includes back-end application processing, deployment of personnel, and procurement and space renovations.

As you know, when the card was launched in January, demand far exceeded our expectations, but since that time we have dramatically increased capacity at enrollment sites citywide – IDNYC is now accepting an average of 20,000 applications per week. Additional funding for the program is at \$6.5 million in FY’15 and \$14.8 million in FY’16 for total funding of \$20 million and \$25 million respectively. As we saw this year, if the level of demand remains higher than projected, adjustments can be made on an expedited basis. However, as more and more New Yorkers obtain their IDNYC, we expect demand to level off and the budget is reflective of that. We will continue to deploy appropriate staffing and resources to meet the demand so that every New Yorker who wants a card is able to obtain one.

### **ASSISTANCE FOR CLIENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

HRA continues to implement significant reforms to provide greater accessibility to our benefits and services for clients with disabilities as part of our commitment to providing reasonable accommodations and to meet the requirements of the Lovely H. federal court settlement. With funding at \$507,000 in 2015 and \$13.1 million in 2016, HRA is developing and implementing policies and procedures and modifying programs to provide clients with disabilities meaningful access to our programs and services. HRA’s new Office of Disability Affairs and the Office of Customized Assistance, in conjunction with an expert consultant, are developing tools to assess clients’ need for reasonable accommodations as the result of physical and/or mental health limitations or other impairments, so that HRA can then provide the appropriate accommodations.

HRA will provide case management services, based on the needs of the client, in an effort to assist clients with disabilities to maintain their benefits and connect them to federal disability benefits where appropriate. And as with all clients, before taking a negative action for failure to comply with required activities, HRA will review the case and, in these instances, ensure that the client’s disability was not a factor in the non-compliance and that reasonable accommodations, if needed, were provided to enable the client to comply with required activities. Staff training and community engagement are essential to implementing meaningful changes to ensure that New Yorkers who should be receiving benefits are not being denied because of actual or perceived disability.

The last few slides in our PowerPoint present several representative new reforms that we have been underway since I testified at the Preliminary Budget hearing. We have accomplished a great deal over the past year and since March, and we are pleased that the Executive Budget will allow us to continue with our reform initiatives during the coming year.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify and I welcome your questions.