



Testimony of FPWA

Presented to:

**New York City Council Committee on Oversight and Investigations and Committee on Contracts
Joint Oversight Hearing Revisiting City Contracts Serving Asylum Seekers in New York City
Hon. Chair Gale A. Brewer; Hon. Chair Julie Won
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Good morning committee members, Chair Brewer, and Chair Won. Thank you for calling this important hearing on Revisiting City Contracts Serving Asylum Seekers in New York City.

FPWA is an anti-poverty policy and advocacy organization committed to advancing economic opportunity, justice, and upward mobility for New Yorkers with low incomes. Since 1922, FPWA has driven groundbreaking policy reforms to better serve those in need. We work to dismantle the systemic barriers that impede economic security and well-being, and strengthen the capacity of human services agencies and faith organizations so New Yorkers with lower incomes can thrive and live with dignity.

Nonprofit and community-based organizations (CBOs) have been critical to our city historically and today. Their inherent ability to make deep connections with the communities they serve, and to quickly adapt to changing needs therein has provided lifelines for residents living through these prolonged health, social, and economic crises, largely at the expense of providers.

New York City is currently navigating a difficult fiscal environment. Federal and State funding failed to keep up with inflation, while the end of funding from the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (CAA), and the American Rescue Plan (ARP) have contributed to funding shortfalls in New York City's human services programs.¹

Since the Spring of 2022, when asylum seekers began arriving in New York City in larger numbers, the Adams Administration and City Council has been working with the human services sector to provide critical aid such as legal services, shelter, food assistance, language access, healthcare and much more. This has put a strain on the human services sector.

In many cases City officials asked providers to deliver these services before issuing RFPs for new programming or expanding existing contracts, leaving providers, who are largely nonprofits, to deplete their funds without a guarantee of reimbursement.

A recent survey of the sector by the Human Services Council revealed that between November 2022 and January of 2023, 40% of the 64 surveyed organizations were asked by the government to provide services for asylum seekers, but less than 13% were offered complete funding for their services.

While 29% of respondents reported working with government-run service hubs, many worked within hubs developed in lieu of support by the government.² This lack of coordination is detrimental to the efficient delivery of essential services. Without coordination, City contractors struggle to make referrals, ensure that they do not duplicate work, or identify gaps where additional services are needed. City government needs to step up and create greater order in the delivery of services to asylum seekers.

¹ <https://www.fpwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Human-Services-Funding-Tracker-Annual-Update-FY22-5.24.23-3.pdf>

² [Welcoming Our Newest Neighbors: \(humanservicescouncil.org\)](https://humanservicescouncil.org/)

The vacancies in City agencies likely contribute to the difficulty of offering such operational support.³ Processing delays for public benefits have increased in the last year. During FY23, the Human Resources Administration (HRA) processed approximately 29 percent of cash assistance applications it received, down from 82 percent the year before, and approximately 40 percent of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) applications, down from 60 percent the year before.⁴ New York needs to close the wage gaps that exist between City employees and City contractors doing the same work. By FY25 New York City's funding for human services contractors will reach \$150 million after wage adjustments, which is approximately 40 times less than the average budget for human services City employees over the last few years.⁵

Now, Mayor Adams has proposed a 15 percent budget cut across agencies, that will strike a blow to human services programs that are currently insufficiently funded, harming not only recently arrived asylum seekers, but long-time residents as well. This would remove approximately \$16.5 billion from New York City agencies in a single year.

Adding to the harm of these budget cuts, Mayor Adams also implied that they were necessary due to the arrival of 100,000 asylum seekers over the last year, even the Adams Administration's own figures show an additional \$7 billion is needed to cover asylum seeker costs that are projected over the next two years (based on the 2024 Enacted Budget). This has played into xenophobic narratives, framing asylum seekers as outsiders, and suggesting that any programs aimed at or including this population are conducted at the expense of other vulnerable New Yorkers.

To address the systemic issue that are hampering delivery of services to asylum seekers FPWA makes the following recommendations:

- Oppose Mayor Adams' proposed 15% budget cut and hiring freeze across agencies. These policies will only exacerbate the burdens on the human services sector and leave many New Yorkers, including asylum seekers, without essential services.
- Consider other cost reducing measures such as decreasing NYPD overtime (which hit \$2.2 billion in FY 2022)⁶, and minor, progressive tax adjustments⁷ (which could raise an additional \$1 billion per year).
- Increase funding for immigration legal services to both file application for asylum, temporary protected status, work authorization and more, but also to ensure that the migrants do not end up in deportation proceedings exacerbating the tremendous backlog in immigration courts.⁸ Asylum seekers have a 1-year filing deadline to file their applications, unless they fall into narrow

³ <https://www.cityandstateny.com/policy/2023/09/staffing-shortages-are-still-disrupting-new-york-city-services/390403/>

⁴ <https://citylimits.org/2023/09/18/nyc-failing-to-process-most-food-stamp-cash-benefit-applications-on-time/>

⁵ [https://www.fpwa.org/resource-center/reports-briefs/fpwas-in-depth-budget-analysis-nyc-fiscal-year-2024-adopted-budget/#:~:text=The%20adopted%20FY%202024%20budget,continuing%20total%20of%20\\$24150%20million.](https://www.fpwa.org/resource-center/reports-briefs/fpwas-in-depth-budget-analysis-nyc-fiscal-year-2024-adopted-budget/#:~:text=The%20adopted%20FY%202024%20budget,continuing%20total%20of%20$24150%20million.)

⁶ <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/nypd-overspending-on-overtime-grew-dramatically-in-recent-years/#:~:text=Through%20February%202023%2C%20NYPD%20has,nearly%20double%20the%20amount%20budgeted.>

⁷ <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/raising-revenues/>

⁸ <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/letter-to-mayor-adams-re-prioritizing-immigration-legal-services-to-assist-asylum-seekers-on-pathways-out-of-shelter/>

exceptions, and for many asylum seekers who are not eligible for other forms of immigration relief, this is their sole avenue for gaining access to work authorization.

- Call for the Biden Administration, who recently extended and redesignated Temporary Protected Status to Venezuelans who arrived in the U.S. on or before July 31, 2023, to extend TPS to additional countries whose national cannot safely return to their home countries.⁹
- Expand housing vouchers to all New Yorkers regardless of immigration status. A report by the NYIC and Win argues that expanding housing subsidy programs, particularly housing voucher, to immigrants could save the city almost \$3 billion by cycling folks out of sheltering into permanent housing. This will also create additional spaces in New York City's shelter system.
- Focus its resources on providing essential human services to asylum seekers rather than contracting with third parties to transport and housing migrants outside of New York City, to circumvent New York City's right to shelter laws. Migrants, like all others, should be treated with dignity, and allegations of mistreatment against the migrants that are being investigated by Attorney General are incredibly disturbing. The practice of bussing migrants to hotels in other parts of the State should cease; without representation it is likely that asylum seekers cannot provide informed consent for such a move.¹⁰

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Asylum seekers deserve to be treated with dignity. Disinvestment from the human service sector and neglect of coordination work at the City-level is exacerbating the issue of service delivery. We at FPWA look forward to working closely with you to ensure that our human services system is supported, and New Yorkers receive the assistance they deserve.

⁹ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XuoKM0nXY6mRRQthMdr8YGSMdCxmBk3B/view>;
<https://gothamist.com/news/biden-admin-extends-immigration-protections-to-venezuelan-migrants-including-thousands-in-nyc>

¹⁰ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/21/nyregion/nyc-migrants-docgo-investigation.html>