



New York City Comptroller
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NEWS

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COMPTROLLER STRINGER OP-ED: ALL HANDS ON DECK VS. HOMELESSNESS

NEW YORK – New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer wrote an [op-ed](#) published today in the *New York Daily News* on steps the City can take to help alleviate the homeless crisis in our City. Some of the main points from the op-ed are highlighted below:

Thousands of New Yorkers sleep on the streets every night:

Last night, despite a sustained economic recovery, more than 56,000 New Yorkers slept in a shelter. Among them were 23,000 children who will soon head to their first day of school with one hand tied behind their back.

No one is blameless for this human catastrophe: not the federal government, which has slashed funding for public housing and social services; not the state, which has balked at fully funding a joint city-state rental assistance program; and not the city, which continues to approach the crisis of homelessness as if it were an unforeseeable emergency.

Temporary measures aren't cutting it:

In the last 20 months, my office has approved emergency declarations from the Department of Homeless Services for over 2,180 shelter units for homeless families and over 1,420 shelter beds for single adults. Too often, we've also had to send back contracts because the city hasn't done enough to make sure that families aren't being forced to live in rat-infested hovels with many violations.

What's needed is a bigger, bolder homeless-prevention plan.

No option should be off the table, including the creation of a land bank, boosting placements in NYCHA units & setting aside more housing and funding for those on the lower end of the income spectrum:

No solution should be off the table, including the creation of a New York City Land Bank. From Buffalo and Syracuse to Cleveland and Atlanta, land banks are facilitating the return of vacant and tax-delinquent properties to productive use. Just as Mayor Ed Koch used city-owned properties to boost our affordable housing stock, a land bank could help rebuild neighborhoods devastated by the foreclosure crisis.

That's a long-term strategy. In the meantime, the city needs to leverage existing assets. That means boosting placements of homeless families in NYCHA units from its current commitment of at least 750 units to as close to 2,500 units as possible. NYCHA units have long been dedicated to helping those in greatest need, and a recent audit by my office found over 1,300 NYCHA apartments have sat empty and unused for years. Thousands more become vacant due to normal turnover every year.

In addition, as part of its broader plan to build or preserve 200,000 units of affordable housing, the city should dedicate more resources to those at the lower end of our city's income spectrum and set aside a portion of the new units for homeless families.

The state must also do more, by dedicating funds to create 30,000 units of supportive housing for homeless New Yorkers living with special needs, including those struggling with mental illness and substance abuse issues, and fully supporting joint city-state efforts at rental assistance programs that transition people out of shelters and into permanent housing.

The full op-ed can be read [here](#).