

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

October 19, 2020

Re: Veto Request for A.7820/S.7215-A Requiring public hearings for new homeless shelters in New York City.

Dear Governor Cuomo:

Together, the New York Housing Conference and the Citizens Housing and Planning Council strongly urge you to veto A.7820/S.7215-A. This bill will prevent the City from opening new homeless shelters anywhere in the City by creating an additional opportunity for a vocal minority of NIMBY obstructionists to stoke fear, outrage, and discrimination against families and individuals based solely on their housing status.

We know that the best solution to homelessness is affordable housing and we also view this bill as a threat to siting affordable housing in communities should its intent be built upon in future legislative efforts.

As New York and the nation as a whole try to tackle systemic inequalities of race, poverty, and oppression, this bill goes in the opposite direction. It will further discrimination against homeless people and as you know, New York City's shelter system predominately serves poor people of color. Even during this pandemic, we have seen the ugly and hateful opposition to housing the homeless in emergency shelters, a policy designed to protect *all* New Yorkers from the spread of Covid-19. Signing this bill into law will ignore the ugly reality of public forums for shelter and the racial and social class undertones contained within.

We reject the notion that homeless people inherently create "public safety concerns". Being too poor to afford rent in one of the most expensive cities in the world does not make a person dangerous. In fact, as the City continues to reel from the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, more and more New Yorkers are likely to find themselves in need of shelter services. We should not be creating barriers to standing up programs to support them at such a critical moment but rather easing restrictions to ensure that every community in the City is ready to do their part to support people falling into homelessness.

In an ideal world, community engagement would be included in public siting of shelters and a host of other siting actions that impact communities, but we do not live in an ideal world. If this legislation is signed into law, new barriers will be created in meeting our state's obligation to upholding the right to shelter and new divisions of race and class will be sewn. New York, as a beacon of progressive values, must move away from discriminatory and exclusionary practices and policies, not just in housing, but also shelter.

We implore you to veto A.7820/S.7215-A.

Sincerely,



Rachel Fee
Executive Director
New York Housing Conference



Jessica Katz
Executive Director
Citizens Housing & Planning Council