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As I testified previously in November 2011, the partnership between Care for the Homeless, where I work as Program Coordinator, and the New York City Campaign Finance Board's Voter Assistance Unit has strengthened our agency's ability to facilitate voter engagement, education, and registration among the homeless clients that we serve. For a brief background on our work, at Care for the Homeless, we provide healthcare, human services, and shelter to more than 8,000 clients each year. We serve families and individuals in four out of the five boroughs at locations ranging from shelters to soup kitchens. Our work meeting the needs of our clients includes not only providing medical and behavioral health services but also removing the barriers to voting that many people face as a result of being homeless.

Removing barriers to voting for our client population requires developing and implementing a community-specific approach to voter engagement, education, and registration. In 2012, with valuable support from the Campaign Finance Board and the Voter Assistance Advisory Committee, we registered homeless clients to vote at 16 service sites across the city. We also created and distributed voter education resources to clients to make it easier to navigate the voting process. These materials emphasized voting rights for the homeless population and clarified voter eligibility requirements. Finally, in order to encourage our clients to engage civically and choose to vote, we made and used a peer-driven tool: a PSA featuring members of the Consumer Advisory Board and their reasons for voting. Without these initiatives specific to the needs of our client population, many of our clients would have lacked necessary information to know that they were eligible to vote, to know how to register to vote, and, in some cases, to know where to vote.

Looking forward, I want to extend support to proposals that would benefit our homeless clients by further removing their barriers to registering to vote and to voting. Two key legislative changes that would increase access to voting for particularly vulnerable populations, such as homeless New Yorkers, would be enabling same-day voter registration and enabling voters to cast their ballot at any polling location in the city. If New Yorkers were able to register to vote and cast ballots on the same day, this would simplify the election process for participants. As a result, special populations like New York City's homeless voters, who face particular hurdles as a result of their insecure housing, would be better equipped to navigate through the voting process. For example, due to their lack of stable housing, homeless people often relocate frequently – moving between shelters or other temporary housing placements. Therefore, addresses change regularly, making it difficult for these voters to receive mail or to report to the proper polling location. If same day registration were available, I believe it would increase voter participation among homeless voters and other transient populations. Secondly, if New York City established a voting system in which voters could cast ballots at any polling location, our clients would be able to vote wherever is most accessible to them, given financial constraints, as well as the realities of sometimes being located in an entirely different borough than where they were previously, at the time of voter registration. While a re-vamped system with these two major changes would require hard work on the part of the city, it would absolutely reap extraordinary results in civic participation, especially for disenfranchised voters. These changes

would reflect the city's dedication to prioritizing inclusion and increasing access for all New Yorkers eligible to vote, even the ones most vulnerable and least connected, such as the homeless clients that Care for the Homeless serves.