NYSCADV NEW YORK STATE COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE | Safe Horizon | Violence Intervention Program | Volunteers of America GREATER NEW YORK

A3264B / S7738A

SAFE SHELTER ACT

Single survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and trafficking are in crisis. New York's domestic violence (DV) shelter system was designed primarily for families with children, leaving survivors seeking shelter alone with limited access to this lifesaving resource—and at heightened risk of danger and homelessness.

The Securing Access to Fair & Equal (SAFE) Shelter Act (A3264B/S7738A Hevesi/Gounardes) will fix that.

A system built for families is failing single survivors.

Most of New York's DV shelter units were built to accommodate families, rather than individuals. NYC Domestic Violence Hotline data shows that **more than half of callers** seeking shelter are single, but singles make up only **11%** of those connected to shelter for an intake. The gap is widening: since 2020, the share of single survivors seeking shelter has increased by **6%**, while successful placements have dropped by **14%**.

Funding rules force DV shelter providers to turn survivors away.

Providers can "downsize" family units designated for one adult and one child to serve single survivors— but New York's funding model pays based on number of individuals served, not households. When a single adult stays in a room with two beds, providers receive only 50% of the funding, despite fixed costs.

This creates a financial disincentive to serve single survivors, forcing many to remain in unsafe situations, become homeless, or enter general population shelters that do not provide the trauma-informed support or confidential location of a DV shelter.

The SAFE Shelter Act will immediately expand access to more survivors.

The Act updates the funding formula to cover the full cost of serving a single adult in a two-bed unit. A3264B/S7738A outlines a 3-year plan, projected to cost **$6M in Year 1**, and **$12M at full implementation**.

Equity for survivors most often left behind.

The SAFE Shelter Act will expand access for single survivors, including LGBTQ+, male, older adults, and trafficking survivors—groups more likely to seek shelter alone. Pregnant survivors and those working to reunite with their children will also benefit.

Stabilizing a system at risk.

DV programs across the State are in significant financial distress, including one provider already forced to close on Long Island. The SAFE Shelter Act is a critical first step to stabilize the sector while expanding access to life-saving shelter.

We urge Governor Hochul and the New York State Legislature to pass and sign the SAFE Shelter Act, so New York can meet its obligation to all survivors.

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Sean's Story

Sean* experienced intimate partner violence in his relationship with his ex-girlfriend while living together in Pennsylvania. He left the relationship and went to New York City, but didn't have a place to stay and became street homeless. Reluctant to stay in a homeless shelter because of fear of unsafe conditions, Sean stayed on the street where he became suicidal and ended up in a hospital.

At the hospital, he learned about Safe Horizon's 24-Hour HOPE Hotline. Despite calling repeatedly over the course of a month, there was not an opening at a domestic violence shelter available for him.

Finally, Safe Horizon was able to place Sean at one of their domestic violence shelters. Sean arrived feeling down and depressed but was connected to a social worker who provided counseling to help him process his emotions. After three months in shelter, Sean has successfully secured his own apartment as well as employment and is in a much happier state-of-mind.

Melissa's Story

Melissa* moved to New York City to be with a partner that she had met online. Their long-distance relationship grew, but when she moved to be with him, he was physically abusive. The physical abuse continued, and her boyfriend also began to threaten to release explicit images of Melissa. Already isolated in a city where she did not know many people, she struggled further because her partner would not allow her to have a phone.

Melissa ended up in the hospital where she was referred to Safe Horizon's 24-Hour HOPE Hotline. When she was able to escape her boyfriend's home, she bought a prepaid phone and called the Hotline repeatedly trying to find a safe place to stay.

She was told it would be difficult to get placed as a single person without children, but an advocate encouraged her to keep calling, Finally, Melissa was placed in a domestic violence shelter. After about one month, she is already feeling less anxious.

*** Names have been changed to protect client confidentiality.**

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