



THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER  
BRAD LANDER

May 30, 2023

The Honorable Eric Adams  
Mayor  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

**Re: Providing a regular, detailed, and accurate count of asylum seekers in New York City's shelter systems**

Dear Mayor Adams,

Until this month, your Administration was providing the Comptroller's office with a regular (generally weekly) report of the specific number of asylum seekers in shelters operated by the Department of Homeless Services (DHS), and in HERRCs being operated by Health + Hospitals. Earlier this month, we were informed that the Administration would no longer provide this information.

The decision to cease to provide our office with this information raises serious concerns. This data is critical to performing our office's Charter-mandated oversight duties and ensuring the public understands the magnitude of this crisis, its cost, and the scale of the necessary response. We used the earlier numbers to produce our estimates for the FY 2024 budget, which we are mandated to produce. Providing numbers rounded to the nearest hundred, without breaking out the numbers in the different forms of shelter the City is now offering – which have now grown to include shelters (operated by DHS), HERRCs (operated by H+H), respite centers (operated by NYCEM), and hotels outside the city (operated by HPD) – is wholly insufficient.

Last week, I shared these concerns with Deputy Mayor Anne Williams-Isom, and I appreciated her reassurance that more detailed reporting would be resumed. This letter is to further specify our need for and insistence on this information.

When we granted the Administration prior approval for emergency contracting for shelter and services for asylum seekers in July 2022, your Administration assured us that we would receive timely data that pertained to that procurement, so that we could ensure that emergency authorization was being used properly, and that public dollars are being spent wisely and in line with City obligations.

**We insist that the Administration resume weekly reporting of the asylum seeker census by Monday, June 5th.** These reports must provide:

- Number of asylum seekers in DHS shelters, HERRCs, respite centers, and hotels the City is paying for outside New York City.
- Differentiation by Families with Children, Adult Families, and Single Adults in each type of shelter.

In addition, our office needs the following in order to document the City's spending on shelter and services for asylum seekers:

- Average length of stay for asylum seekers, disaggregated by type of shelter.
- Percent remaining in shelter for longer than three months.
- Number of units and room rates by hotel for those being paid and managed by HANYC.
- Average per diem rate of shelter costs as of April 2022, separately for DHS and HERRC shelters.
- Per diem rate of shelter cost added since April 2022.
- Regular updates of all relevant emergency and non-emergency contracts (DSS/DHS, OEM, DCAS, H+H, DDC, and others).
- Any paid regular hours or overtime performed by city employees tracked in City Time under project codes established for the Asylum Emergency Declaration.
- A detailed accounting of the costs associated with erecting, dismantling, rebuilding and operating the HERRC facilities.

This information is essential not only for trust, transparency, and oversight, but also to submit costs to the State and Federal government for reimbursement. As you have rightly and consistently been highlighting, Washington has thus far failed to provide meaningful reimbursement for the City's costs for this truly extensive undertaking. In order to make the most compelling case for Federal (and additional State) reimbursement, we need a clear accounting of all costs.

Thank you for your prompt reinstatement of detailed, weekly reporting on the number of asylum seekers receiving shelter from the City of New York, and for the additional information requested regarding the provision of shelter and its costs.

Sincerely,



Brad Lander  
New York City Comptroller