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**Testimony of Liza Pappas, Education Policy Analyst,
New York City Independent Budget Office
On the Education Department's Support for Students Who Are Homeless
Or in Temporary Housing
To the City Council Committees on General Welfare and Education
February 4, 2016**

Good afternoon. My name is Liza Pappas and I am an education policy analyst at the New York City Independent Budget Office. Thank you for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing. My testimony is based on ongoing research IBO has been conducting concerning New York City students in temporary housing and challenges to their school success.

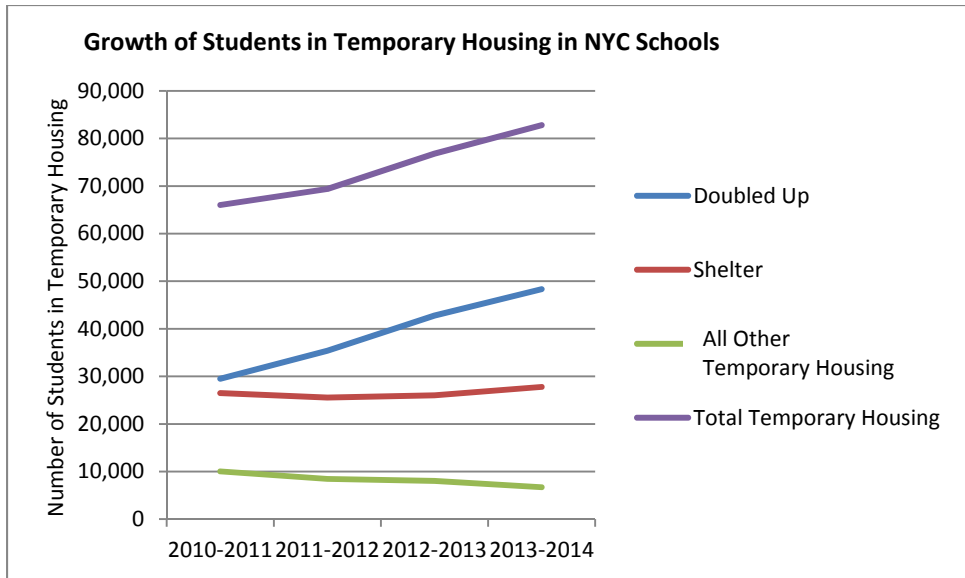
As part of our legislatively authorized access to student-level Department of Education data, IBO receives a data file from the department that indicates public school students who have self-identified as living in temporary housing on a school-based residency questionnaire. City schools are asked to distribute this questionnaire to every student at the beginning of each school year, and again to any student who reports a change in residency. An indicator of temporary housing, then, is for any one period of time during the school year—it does not provide any information on the duration of a student's stay in a homeless shelter or other temporary housing.

To date we have received data on students in temporary housing for a period of four years spanning school years 2009-2010 through 2013-2014. In the past year we have also interviewed over 100 Department of Education employees from 12 schools that serve large shares of students in temporary housing and have spoken with 50 families that have reported being in temporary housing for some part of the period. I will briefly outline five findings for this hearing.

First, I will begin with a broad overview. In school year 2013-2014, nearly 83,000 young people attending the city's public schools—roughly 8 percent of the system's 1.1 million students—were identified as in temporary housing. Thirty-four percent reported living in homeless shelters while 58 percent said they were "doubled up," which the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act¹ defines as shared housing due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason. An additional 8 percent were awaiting foster care placement or resided in other temporary housing situations (such as hotels/motels, cars, parks, public spaces, or abandoned property). In total, these troubling numbers represent a 25 percent increase in the number of students living in such conditions since the 2010-2011 school year.²

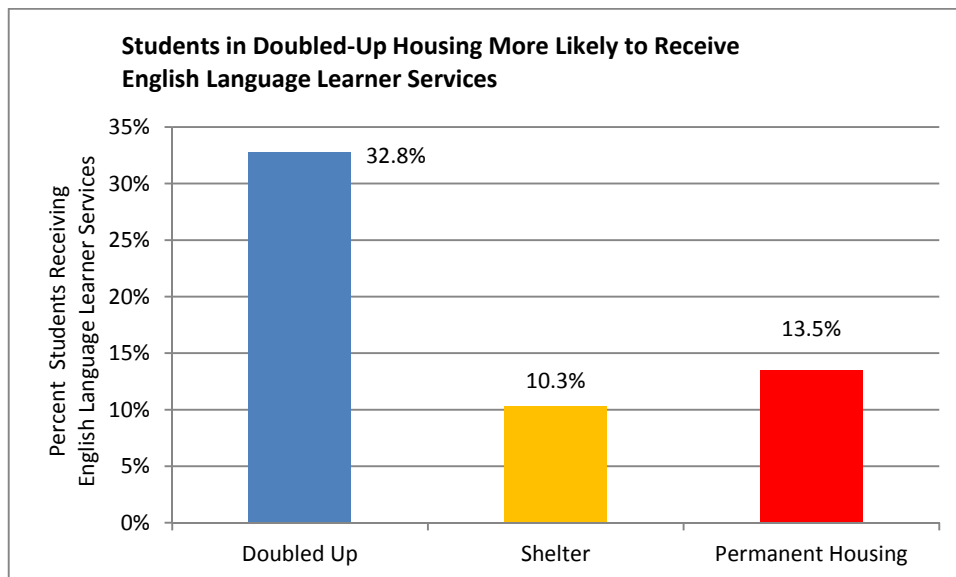
¹ <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg116.html#sec721>

² These numbers do not include New York City students enrolled in charter schools.

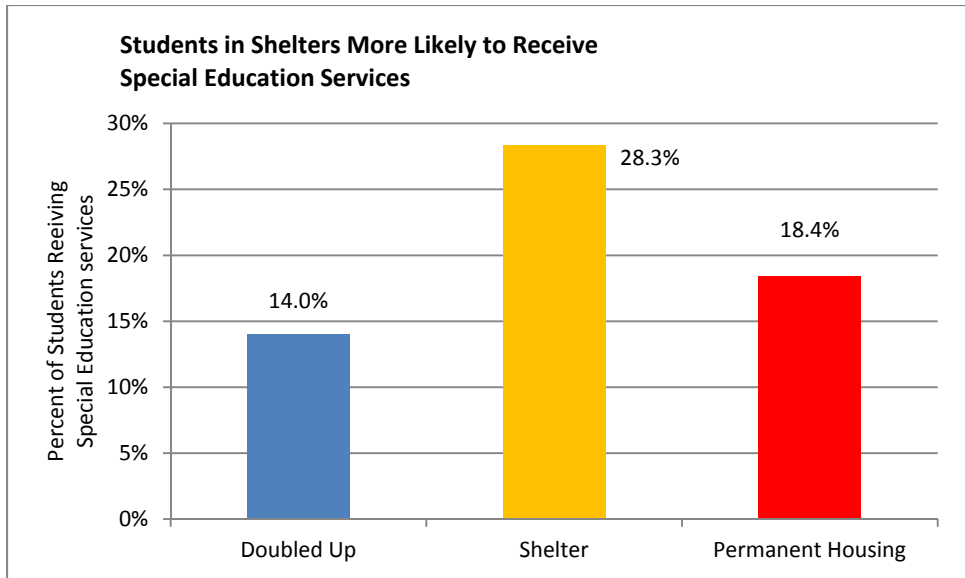


SOURCE: IBO analysis of Department of Education data, 2010-2014
 NOTE: Excludes students in charter schools.

Second, let me underscore that students identified in the two largest temporary housing categories, doubled up and the shelter system, present as two different groups of students—of course with variation between and within each of these housing types. The vast majority of students residing in shelters are black (52.8 percent) and Hispanic (42.4 percent). Among those in doubled-up housing, Hispanic (56.7 percent) or Asian (13.9 percent) students are more common. In 2013-2014, students residing in doubled-up housing received English Language Learner services at more than three times the rate of students living in shelters. Students residing in shelters were twice as likely to receive special education services compared with students in doubled-up housing.



SOURCE: IBO analysis of Department of Education data, 2013-2014
 NOTE: Excludes students in charter schools.



SOURCE: IBO analysis of Department of Education data, 2013-2014

NOTE: Excludes students in charter schools.

Generally, students' schooling outcomes also look different by housing type. Analysis of 2013-2014 school year data showed that students in shelters were absent noticeably more than their peers in doubled-up and permanent housing (attendance rates were 81.0 percent compared with 90.2 percent in doubled-up housing and 90.9 percent in permanent housing). Students residing in shelters and other temporary living situations were also suspended at more than twice the rate as students in doubled-up housing and permanent housing (6.4 percent for students in shelters and 7.5 percent for students in other temporary housing compared with 2.6 percent for students doubled up and 3.1 percent for students in permanent housing).

Student Outcomes by Housing Status						
Housing Status	Number of Students	Share of All Students	Attendance Rate	Suspension Rate	ELA Proficiency (Grades 3-8)	Math Proficiency (Grades 3-8)
Doubled Up	48,336	4.50%	90.20%	2.60%	15.10%	21.10%
Shelter	27,772	2.60%	81.00%	6.40%	9.80%	10.40%
All Other Temporary*	6,699	0.60%	83.20%	7.50%	11.60%	14.20%
Permanent Housing	989,240	92.30%	90.90%	3.10%	29.80%	35.90%
TOTAL	1,072,047	100.00%	90.60%	3.20%	28.50%	34.40%

SOURCE: IBO analysis of Department of Education data, 2013-2014

NOTES: Excludes students in charter schools.
 *All Other Temporary includes students awaiting foster care placement, students living in hotels or motels, and students residing in other temporary housing situations. Outcomes are weighted averages.

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While differences in school outcomes appear to be most glaring for students residing in shelters, we also need to know more to understand the educational outcomes of students in doubled-up housing. As

previously noted, the meaning of doubled up is somewhat vague in the federal law. Not surprisingly, IBO found a wide interpretation of this housing categorization in interviews with staff across various schools. Some considered whether the family had the security of a lease, others whether there was more than one family living in the space, and still others zeroed in on whether the child slept in a bed. Some expressed apprehension about using the doubled-up categorization given that New York City has been a key immigration portal for over a century, and as a result many families have had the experience of sharing housing. Given the variation in how different schools interpret the federal standard, it is likely that the students in this category include a wide variety of housing arrangements with some more likely to have a negative impact on school outcomes than others.

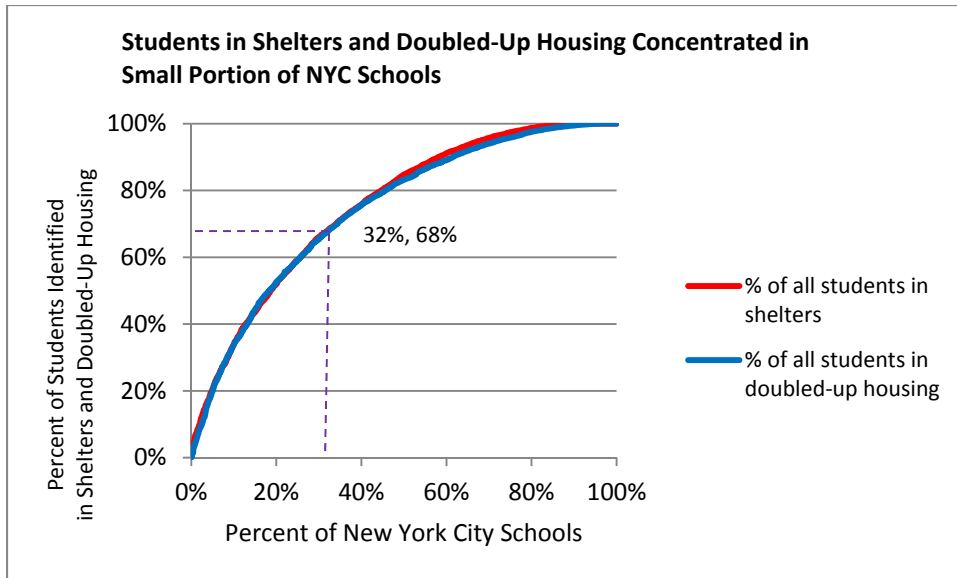
Third, we need to consider the use of the term *temporary*. Comparing data across all four years, IBO has found significant numbers of students who are identified as living in a shelter or in doubled-up housing in more than one year. Recall that in the DOE data, while we know whether a student was living in temporary housing at some point in a given school year, we do not know for how long. That said, the data suggest that for at least some students, these “temporary” housing arrangements are long-lived. When we look across four years of data we do see some students in temporary housing in more than one year.

- For the 27,772 students identified as living in shelters in school year 2013-2014, 67 percent were also identified as living in a shelter in at least one of the three previous school years and 22 percent were identified as living in a shelter in all three previous school years.

Similar results were found for students living in doubled-up situations:

- For the 48,336 students identified as living in doubled-up housing in school year 2013-2014, 62 percent were also identified as living in doubled-up housing in at least one of the three previous school years, and 21 percent were identified as living doubled up in all three previous school years.

Fourth, students identified in temporary housing—shelters and doubled-up housing—are concentrated in a relatively small number of city schools. In 2013-2014, one-third of New York City schools served close to 70 percent of all students identified as living in shelter and doubled-up residences citywide. This means that the kinds of educational challenges mentioned earlier (absences, suspensions) disproportionately impact a small number of schools. It is true that students and families without stable housing can be found in every neighborhood in this city, but like other subgroups of students in our school system, we see a concentration of students in temporary housing in some schools and not others.



SOURCE: IBO analysis of Department of Education data, 2013-2014

NOTES: Based on 1,669 schools; does not include students in alternative education programs (District 79), special education schools and programs (District 75), and charter schools. Schools ranked in ascending order by percentage of their enrollment identified in shelters or doubled-up housing.

Lastly, schools do not receive additional resources to provide academic, counseling, or social supports for students who are without stable housing. Schools are asked to set aside \$100 of their Title I allocation for every child they identify as being in temporary housing. Principals, teachers, guidance counselors, social workers, parent coordinators, and other staff across the 12 schools that participated in the qualitative component of our study underscored that \$100 could not be stretched beyond a school uniform, sweatshirt, or backpack.

From school years 2010-2011 through 2013-2014, while the population of students in temporary housing increased by 25 percent there was no increase in state dollars to support mandated services and programs. For each of these four years, the education department's Office of Students in Temporary Housing received \$8.3 million in Attendance Improvement Dropout Prevention funds; 68 percent (\$5.6 million) was used to cover the salaries of roughly 115 family assistants (\$5.6million)—educational liaisons between homeless shelters and schools. The remaining funds covered the salaries of the eight borough directors (content experts), two borough-based managers, four central staff, and programming expenses.

Additional federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance grant funds are available to facilitate the enrollment, attendance, and success for students living in temporary housing. For the last grant cycle from July 1, 2013-June 30, 2016 the Department of Education received close to \$4 million, about \$1.5 million on average for each of these three years, with most of the money going to programming.

Families who participated in focus groups we conducted verified that they were without many basic resources (transportation, clothing, space for homework) that better-housed families can more readily

provide to support their child's education. While families attested to the many teachers and school staff who had personally provided items such as coats or food, supports for counseling, tutoring, after-school programming, child care, job training, and affordable housing were far beyond their reach.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I welcome your questions.