



New York City Ships Homeless Out of State

Former Democratic presidential candidate and current New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio has implemented the “Special One-Time Assistance Program (SOTA), which gives homeless families a year’s worth of rent. Since SOTA began in August 2017 it has sent 5,074 homeless families — a total of 12,482 people, to cities across the United States, including places as far from New York as Hawaii and Puerto Rico. In order to qualify for SOTA, homeless people and homeless families must “prove they have been in a New York City shelter for at least 90 days and that their household income is no more than twice what it owes in rent.”



Since SOTA began, it has cost New York taxpayers \$89 million for rent alone. Another New York City plan called “Project Reconnect,” funds travel expenses such as airline or bus tickets for the homeless to get to new homes in other states.

In addition to paying for rent, SOTA also pays for furnishings. Although the city has not release figures for that expense, one SOTA recipient said she received \$1,000 for furnishings.

The *New York Post* reported that the city’s Department of Homeless Services (DHS) defended the massive costs of these programs, claiming that it actually saves the city the cost of shelter funding, which amounts to about \$41,000 annually per family, compared to the average yearly rent of \$17,563 to house families elsewhere.

The *Post* observed that hundreds of these families are returning to New York’s five boroughs, and some are even suing the city of New York for being abandoned in barely livable conditions. Furthermore, officials in towns where New York’s homeless are sent “are up in arms.”

“We were initially seeing a lot of complaints about conditions. Now that the program has been in operation long enough that the SOTA subsidy is expiring, one of our main concerns is it might not be realistic for people to be entirely self-sufficient after that first year,” the *Post* said, quoting Jacquelyn Simone, policy analyst at Coalition for the Homeless.

An AP report in *Townhall.com* noted that after New York City spends approximately \$41,000 per family to move them out of the city, elected officials in the areas where they are moved to are now worried that their districts will be unable to handle these newly arrived transplants should they need public assistance.

“Hawaii will not be able to handle a large number of homeless people being dumped here should New York continue this practice,” Hawaiian Democratic state Representative John Mizuno claimed after



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learning one family moved to Honolulu.

DHS spokesman Isaac McGinn said the city of New York “remains committed to using every tool at our disposal to help these families and individuals find stability in the ways that work for them.”

“Any American, including any New Yorker experiencing homelessness, has the right to seek housing where they can afford it and employment where they can find it.”

While that statement is true, it does not necessarily follow that it is the responsibility of New York City’s taxpayers to pay for that relocation.

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Warren Mass has served The New American since its launch in 1985 in several capacities, including marketing, editing, and writing. Since retiring from the staff several years ago, he has been a regular contributor to the magazine. Warren writes from Texas and can be reached at wmass@thenewamerican.com.



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