

For Immediate Release
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SUPPORTIVE HOUSING NETWORK OF NEW YORK MEMBERS SOUND ALARM OVER STAFFING SHORTAGE, DEMAND BETTER WAGES FOR ESSENTIAL HUMAN SERVICES WORKERS ON FRONT LINES OF HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

Experts Testify On FY'23 Preliminary Budget, Urge City Council Members To Expand Services & Housing Options For Vulnerable New Yorkers

New York, New York (March 10, 2022) – Members of the Supportive Housing Network of New York (the Network) warned members of the City Council General Welfare and Mental Health Committees at hearings held Wednesday, March 9, 2022, that the FY'23 preliminary budget falls short in key areas – particularly wage support for essential workers, dangerously underfunded scattered site housing, and agency staffing levels – making it difficult to place the City's most vulnerable residents in safe housing and provide them with life-saving services.

If they are serious about combatting homelessness and addressing the affordable housing crisis, the Mayor and Council members must invest in the Human Resources Administration (HRA) and provide it with sufficient resources to quickly place qualified individuals in available supportive units, experts testified.

In addition, the City can help address the 20 percent supportive housing staff shortage by matching the State's proposed 5.4 percent COLA for all human services contracts, setting a living wage floor, and fully funding scattered site housing contracts.

"Some Department of Health and Mental Hygiene contracts have combined rental and service budgets of just \$16,000 a year, which is \$5,000 short of covering fair market rent for a studio apartment, let alone provide for adequate services and operating," said **Tierra Labrada, Associate Director of Advocacy and Outreach at the Network**. "This leaves tenants in dangerous and substandard housing and nonprofits operating at a deficit. Current scattered site supportive housing contracts rates should be raised to meet fair market rent and service dollars should match that of NYC 15/15 congregate housing."

"If livable wages are not provided, our short staffing will not meet the next mental health crisis," said **Abbey Nyamekye, Chief Administrative Officer at Center for Urban Community**

Services (CUCS). “We provide critical services that benefit overall health for all New Yorkers, and we ask for compensation that match those that are received by folks hired directly by the City and State.”

"Unless we receive immediate financial relief for our deeply underfunded supportive housing scattered site contracts, we'll have to give them back," **said Thomas Dambakly, Chief Administrative Officer at CAMBA.** “Low rates are jeopardizing nonprofit providers and the tenants they serve.”

"We must ensure funding for more staff for the Human Resources Administration (HRA) to fill supportive housing vacancies," **said Jim Dill, Executive Director at Housing and Services Inc. (HSI).** “We now have vacancy rates in excess of 10 percent. I can’t describe the human costs of people living longer on the streets and in shelters, but the cost is about half a million per vacancy.”

“This budget really has to prioritize all human services sector who were on the frontlines of dealing with this pandemic and continue to be,” **said Patrick Boyle, Assistant Vice President of Public Policy, Volunteers of America - Greater New York.** “We have nearly 1,000 workers in NYC area that are paid poverty wages from government contracts. It hurts morale and the ability to retain staff. This budget has to take a step toward #JustPay and equity for these workers. We’ve kicked this can down the road too far.”

“As a City, we should be thinking of the homelessness crisis as the affordable housing crisis,” **said Cal Hedigan, Chief Executive Officer of Community Access.** “I am deeply disappointed by the preliminary budget. We need an accelerated investment in supportive and deeply affordable housing today to pave the way for a future where all New Yorkers are stably housed.”

If you would like additional information about the aforementioned experts, or to receive a copy of their respective testimonies, please contact: Liz Benjamin, Liz@MarathonStrategies.com.

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About The Network:

The Supportive Housing Network of New York is a 32-year-old nonprofit membership organization representing more than 200 nonprofits statewide that build and run supportive housing. The Network began life as a handful of pioneers seeking to create a respectful new model of housing to meet the needs of chronically homeless New Yorkers and evolved alongside the movement. As the only supportive housing membership organization in the state and the largest in the country, the Network serves as a voice for the provider community, which has created the largest, best managed, and most innovative supportive housing stock in the nation.