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Supportive Housing Providers & Allies Statewide to Governor: Bring Outdated Program Out of the Dark Ages, Preserve 9,000 At-Risk Units!

5-Year Conversion Plan Will Protect Much-Needed Units with Wrap-Around Services – A Proven Approach to Combatting Homelessness as Demand Reaches Crisis Level

NEW YORK, NY – (November 2, 2023) – Close to 100 nonprofit organizations representing all 10 geographic regions of the state have signed a Supportive Housing Network of New York (the Network) letter calling on Gov. Kathy Hochul to address a longstanding funding disparity that threatens the viability of 9,000 supportive housing units at a time of unparalleled need, putting families and individuals at risk of returning to homelessness.

The units are funded by the New York State Supportive Housing Program (NYSSHP), which hasn't seen a significant funding increase since its creation more than three decades ago. NYSSHP provides annual service funding of just \$2,736 for individuals and \$3,672 for families, with no dedicated rental assistance for the majority of tenants.

By contrast, the Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative (ESSHI), an ambitious and historic program launched in 2016 to fund 20,000 supportive units statewide, allocates up to \$25,000 per unit to cover both social services and rental assistance.

The Network-led letter proposes a simple solution: Convert the 9,000 units now solely funded by NYSSHP to ESSHI through a five-year, phased-in approach. This plan will end an antiquated and chronically underfunded model that is exacerbating a staffing crisis and making it difficult for providers to maintain their buildings while meeting tenants' growing service needs.

“As the state struggles with affordable housing, mental health, opioid, and homelessness crises, along with an influx of migrants, the loss of even a single unit of supportive housing is something we simply cannot afford,” **said Pascale Leone, executive director of the Network.**

“While we appreciate the governor's commitment to addressing these multiple challenges, supportive housing has thus far been overlooked – this can't continue,” Leone added. “Bringing

NYSSHP out of the dark ages is a significant step toward achieving fiscal parity in supportive housing and the conversion of 9,000 units to ESSHI must be included in next year's budget."

This proposal would add just \$32 million to next year's multibillion-dollar state budget for the first year of this five-year transition – a small price to pay to prevent the incredibly costly growth of New York's homeless population.

The 94 signatories of the Network letter represent 45 percent of all 20,000 NYSSHP units in New York and close to 36,700 units across multiple supportive housing programs. Several organizations do not have NYSSHP contracts but have joined this important effort in recognition of the harm that failing to enact this conversion will cause to an already vulnerable population.

Supportive housing tenants are disproportionately people of color, domestic violence survivors, military service veterans, formerly incarcerated individuals, and others – many of whom struggle with increasingly complex mental health challenges and substance use. These tenants require an increased level of services to remain safely housed. The chronic underfunding of NYSSHP makes it difficult to meet this need and to pay competitive wages to a workforce that is increasingly stretched beyond its limits and asked to do more with less.

"Supportive housing is one of the safest and most cost-effective housing solutions for survivors of domestic violence, yet NYSSHP fails to fund the essentials: building security and social services," **said Nicole Branca, Executive Director of New Destiny Housing.** "Despite our endless fundraising to supplement these contracts, it is simply impossible at this point to cover the expenses in our NYSSHP funded buildings. We're hopeful that this Governor will do what those before her didn't and provide sufficient funding to allow our tenants, survivors of domestic violence, to feel safe and rebuild their lives."

"As a mission driven not-for-profit, Housing Visions provides high-quality affordable housing and robust services to vulnerable populations, including veterans and survivors of domestic violence," **said Ben Lockwood, President & CEO, Housing Visions.** "We are appreciative of NYSSHP; however, historical, and present funding is insufficient to deliver all that our residents need to ensure their long-term housing stability and individual success. A conversion of the NYSSHP funding to ESSHI will provide the necessary boost of rental assistance and wrap-around services to our residents ensuring the long-term viability of these critical affordable housing units and corresponding services."

"Because of the chronic underfunding of NYSSHP social services contracts, Housing and Services, Inc. is forced to fund tenant services with rental income meant to fund building maintenance," **said Jim Dill, Executive Director, Housing and Services, Inc.** "The proposed ESSHI conversion is the key to meeting our tenants' ever-evolving needs, preserving our buildings, and ensuring fair compensation for our hard-working staff."

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.