



## **SUPPORTIVE HOUSING ADVOCATES GATHER IN ALBANY TO DEMAND MORE RESOURCES FOR PROGRAMS PROVEN TO COMBAT CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS**

*140+ Attendees from All Corners of New York Meet State Lawmakers, Hear from Champions of the Supportive Housing Community, its Tenants, and its Workforce*

**ALBANY, NY (February 28, 2024)** – Supportive housing advocates from across the state traveled to Albany today to advocate for additional resources and policies to preserve and expand affordable housing with onsite services – a proven method for addressing homelessness among vulnerable New Yorkers.

“Our budgets are moral documents; they really reflect the state’s values, and the current levels of funding that we receive are not equal to our work,” said **Pascale Leone, Executive Director of the Supportive Housing Network of New York (The Network)**. “We have unprecedented homelessness numbers. We have a housing affordability crisis. We have an accessibility crisis. The lifeblood of our movement, our supportive housing staff, are underpaid and overworked. Our tenants are feeling not as safe, are feeling not as supported. We’re saying, ‘No More.’”

Lobby day participants pressed for funding to be included in this year’s state budget to prevent 9,000 units funded solely through the outdated New York State Supportive Housing Program (NYSSHP) from going offline. These funds would be used to convert NYSSHP units to the better-funded Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative (ESSHI) program under a five-year conversion plan that will cost just \$32 million in the first year.

Advocates are also seeking a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for supportive housing staff wages, skill enhancement programs, and a clearer path for case management career advancement to help address staff recruitment and retention issues.

“How can we let outdated and underfunded programs keep the people from thriving?” said **Kenny Alvarez, a tenant advocate**. “I came from nothing to being on the verge of being appointed to a civil service position that helps hungry New Yorkers - all because of what supportive housing has done for me.”

The profound effect of this can't be overstated,” **Alvarez continued**. “Supportive housing gave me everything I never knew I needed. That led to the confidence in me fighting for my own real apartment and continuing my recovery. That's the power supportive housing can give anyone that walks through that path.”

“I always say that by the grace of God, there go I,” said **Assemblymember Maritza Davila**,

**Chair of the Assembly Social Services Committee.** “None of us knows where we’re going to end up tomorrow. None of us. And we better hope there is a safe place where we can live in peace, in harmony, where people are paying attention to our needs. Without supportive housing that’s not going to happen.”

“If you don’t have housing, you have nothing; you are lost,” **Davila continued.** “I’ve been there, and only in that circumstance would you ever get a real grasp of what it is. I will advocate tooth and nail before we leave Albany to have what we need for supportive housing.”

“So many people are living on the streets, we need to have a place for everyone who requires services in New York, and that’s what we’re fighting for,” **said Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal, Chair of the Assembly Housing Committee.** “We know NYSSHP has helped fund thousands of units and provided much-needed services over the years, but that funding has remained unchanged since 1987. Living in New York City is getting more and more expensive. We can’t expect things to work the way they did back in the ‘80s with ‘80s-style funding. It just doesn’t work.”

“Why do we do this work? Because one-in-three New Yorkers across the state will experience abuse by an intimate partner in their lifetime, and access to safe and affordable housing will determine whether they can leave their abuser, survive, and rebuild their lives,” **said Louise Mcknie, Program Director – Raven Hall, New Destiny Housing.** “In the 10 years I’ve worked at New Destiny, I’ve seen first-hand the positive impact of housing on the lives of survivors – especially their children. The children are our future, they’re very important. Providing kids with the opportunity to grow up in a safe environment with one-site services makes a huge difference in their upbringing.”

“We demand housing justice because this is absolutely housing justice issue,” **Leone concluded.** “We recognize that this is also an economic justice issue, and as we are talking about closing the pay equity gap, this is a gender equity issue. And that’s why we’re here.”

Supportive housing is affordable housing with onsite services that helps formerly homeless tenants from a wide variety of backgrounds, including families, youth, seniors, domestic violence survivors, veterans, individuals with substance use and mental health challenges, and others, live in dignity in the community. It has been repeatedly proven to be one of the most effective methods of successfully addressing the homelessness crisis.

For more information, contact Liz Benjamin, [Liz@Marathonstrategies.com](mailto:Liz@Marathonstrategies.com), 518-424-0356. Still photos of today’s event are available upon request.

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