

October 30, 2023

The Honorable Kathy Hochul  
Governor of New York State  
State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul,

Close to four decades ago, New York pioneered a new approach to meeting the needs of people struggling with homelessness and other barriers to stability: providing case management inside housing to connect tenants to community-based services like mental health counseling, alcohol and substance use treatment, job training, childcare, and more. The result was the nation-leading New York State Supportive Housing Program (NYSSHP). Today, with essentially the same budget available since 1987, NYSSHP partially funds services to more than 20,000 households across the state. It is the sole funding source for 9,000 households in supportive housing.

In 2016, the state made an historic commitment to fund 20,000 more much-needed units of supportive housing over a 15-year period and created a new statewide program to accomplish this ambitious goal: The Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative (ESSHI). ESSHI embedded important lessons learned during the evolution of supportive housing in New York, allocating up to \$25,000 per unit to cover both social services and rental assistance.

Unfortunately, NYSSHP has been left behind. 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. As a result of this chronic and severe funding disparity, NYSSHP is in trouble, with 9,000 households statewide that rely solely on funding from this program in imminent jeopardy of returning to homelessness.

**Thankfully, there is a simple solution: Convert the 9,000 at-risk NYSSHP units to ESSHI through a five-year, phased-in approach that will eventually create fiscal parity among supportive housing units across New York.** This proposal would modernize an antiquated funding model, delivering results for thousands of tenants and overstretched staff.

At a time when the state faces crises on multiple fronts – from mental health and proliferation of more addictive and deadly drugs to an influx of migrants straining the shelter and social services systems – the loss of even a single supportive housing unit would be a significant setback. Each new ESSHI unit is a net zero benefit to the State if a NYSSHP unit is lost.

The conversion of NYSSHP to ESSHI would cost an additional \$32 million in FY 2024-25 – an incredibly small portion of the multibillion-dollar annual state budget that will more than pay for itself over time by avoiding the high cost of adding to New York's homelessness population.

Systemic underfunding of NYSSHP has put vulnerable individuals and families – disproportionately Black people and people of color who have suffered from trauma, survived domestic violence, served in our military, returned from incarceration, and struggle with complex mental health challenges and the often deadly consequences caused by the increase of fentanyl in the illicit drug supply – at risk. It also has exacerbated a chronic staffing shortage, as supportive housing programs

are unable to compete with higher wages available at big box stores and fast-food restaurants. Low wages and related staffing issues have left one NYSSHP-funded residence for survivors of domestic violence with a single case manager for 56 adults and children.

In addition, because of their negative cash flow, NYSSHP-funded programs are unable to access the Supportive Housing Preservation capital made available from HCR, which is necessary to make upgrades and repairs to their buildings – many of which are decades, if not centuries, old. Both tenants and staff pay the price of leaky roofs, faulty elevators, and outdated facilities that are not handicapped accessible.

We recognize and appreciate your commitment to addressing the state’s affordable housing crisis, but we have been disappointed that the supportive housing system – a critical element in New York’s housing ecosystem – has been thus far left out of the discussion. **We implore you to consider including our proposal for bringing NYSSHP out of the dark ages in the 2024-25 state budget and bringing funding equity to the supportive housing system, preserving essential programs and units statewide.**

We stand ready to serve as a resource and to join you in advocating for this much needed and reasonable shift that will make a significant difference in the lives of thousands of New Yorkers.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Supportive Housing Network of New York  
163rd Street Improvement Council, Inc.  
Acacia Network  
ACCORD  
ACMH, Inc.  
Albany Housing Coalition Inc.  
Auburn Housing Authority  
Bethesda House of Schenectady, Inc.  
Boys & Girls Clubs of Syracuse  
Breaking Ground  
Brooklyn Community Housing & Services, Inc.  
CAMBA, Inc.  
CARES of NY, Inc.  
Catholic Charities Housing Office  
Catholic Charities of Onondaga County  
Center for Community Alternatives  
Chances and Changes, Inc.  
CLUSTER, Inc.  
Community Access, Inc.  
Compassionate Family & Individual Services Inc.  
Concern Housing  
Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH)

Credo Community Center for the Treatment of Addictions, Inc  
Enterprise Community Partners  
ETC Housing Corporation  
FACES NY, Inc.  
Family of Woodstock, Inc.  
Family Service League  
Federation of Organizations  
Geel Community Services, Inc.  
GMHC  
HELP USA  
HELPDevCo  
Henry Street Settlement  
Homeward NYC  
Housing & Homeless Coalition of Central New York  
Housing and Services, Inc.  
Housing Visions  
Hudson River Housing  
Institute for Community Living, Inc.  
Jericho Project  
Joseph's House and Shelter  
Keuka Housing Council, Inc.  
Lantern Community Services  
Long Island Coalition for the Homeless  
Long Island Connections  
Long Island Mediation Advocates  
Mohawk Opportunities, Inc.  
Mohawk Valley Housing and Homeless Coalition  
Neighborhood Coalition for Shelter, Inc.  
New Destiny Housing  
NY-511 Southern Tier Homeless Coalition CoC  
Onondaga County Dept Children & Family Services  
Options for Community Living  
Oswego County Opportunities, Inc.  
PathStone Corporation  
Person Centered Housing Options Inc.  
Project FIND  
Providence Housing, Inc.  
Providence Housing Development Corporation  
RECAP, Inc.  
Resurrection House, Inc.  
RiseBoro Community Partnership, Inc.  
RUPCO  
Safe Harbors of the Hudson, Inc.  
Samaritan Center  
Samaritan Daytop Village  
Saving Grace Ministries  
Schenectady Community Action Program  
SEPA Mujer, Inc.  
Shelters of Saratoga  
Sisters of Charity Housing Development Corporation

Southern Tier Environments for Living Inc  
Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach Inc.  
St. Francis Friends of the Poor, Inc.  
The Community Builders, Inc.  
The Family Resource Center of Peekskill, Inc.  
The Fortune Society  
Transitional Living Services of Northern New York  
United Veterans Beacon House  
United Way of Central New York, Inc.  
Unique People Services  
VIP Community Services, Inc.  
WAIT House  
Wellspring  
West Side Federation for Senior and Supportive Housing  
Westchester County Continuum of Care Partnership to End Homelessness  
Wilson Commencement Park  
Win  
YWCA of Binghamton  
YWCA of the Greater Capital Region