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**RACIAL EQUITY IN SUPPORTIVE HOUSING WORKGROUP (RESH) GRADUATES
1st CLASS OF EMERGING LEADERS FROM 24-WEEK CERTIFICATE &
MENTORING PROGRAM**

*Unique Program Advances Racial Equity, Improve Quality of Life For Black Workers In
Supportive Housing, So Leadership More Accurately Reflects Its Client Base*

New York, NY – The Racial Equity in Supportive Housing Workgroup (RESH) today announced that it has graduated its first class of participants in the inaugural Readyng Emerging Leaders in Supportive Housing (RELISH) mentorship program, created to train and support workers in the supportive housing sector who identify as Black to help pave the way for their advancement in the industry.

The 24-week RELISH certificate and mentorship program, which launched on Oct. 7, was designed to provide Black emerging leaders in the nonprofit homeless and housing sectors with the management, leadership, and networking skills necessary for upward mobility.

Twenty-eight participants have successfully completed this unique and important program. They participated today in a graduation ceremony held at Silverman School of Social Work at Hunter College, where they were joined by their mentors, as well as family, friends, and fellow supportive housing industry members, as they received their certificates and reflected on the significance of their accomplishment.

RESH is a volunteer affinity group made up of Black leaders at half a dozen nonprofit organizations. It was formed in 2020 to come up with and implement tangible solutions to address racial inequities in the supportive housing sector.

Close to 70 percent of the City’s homeless population is Black, and 80 percent of the workers providing care for that population are formerly homeless themselves and/or women of color. But Black individuals continue to be underrepresented in the leadership ranks of the organizations that provide those services. RESH and RELISH aim to change that.

Mark Jennings, who will assume the role as Executive Director of Project FIND in January 2023 says the RELISH program is built upon the things he wished were present for him as he moved from a Program Director into executive leadership.

"When I was coming through the ranks, there were many, many times I was the only African American face in executive meetings. This can be lonely, and your voice can get lost. In addition, most of my executive learning was trial by fire," **said Mark Jennings.** "RELISH gives each cohort member a chance to think critically about the next steps in their journey. Scholars get executive learning and have the opportunity to build a network of professional peers to help collectively advance innovation in the sector."

My experience with the RELISH Mentorship Program, to this point, has been enlightening and fulfilling. I appreciate the opportunity to have met other emerging leaders who worked in not-for-profit organizations, serving an under-represented client population. The biweekly seminars offer opportunities to discuss career challenges and achievements, and to share my aspirations toward future career growth. The seminars have felt authentic and refreshing. In addition, I obtained a wealth of knowledge about building and leading a not-for-profit organization," **said Erica Parker-Jackson, BRC and RELISH Scholar.** "My mentor, an intelligent and astute leader, has been transparent, genuine, and honest with me. She has shown keen interest in my career aspirations and created a space for candid dialogue. Our regular meetings have fostered some growth in me; I am more open to entertain all career opportunities as they present themselves."

While we are flooded with online gurus promising everything, nothing impacts more than personal exposure and mentorship. This is what RELISH provided for me and my dynamic cohort," **said Jacqueline C. Holland, RELISH Scholar and Assistant Director of Children's Education, Lantern Community Services.** "When I was a single mom raising 3 children, I earned my BA from Columbia University and have since accrued 30 years of experience in various roles in education and supportive housing. Yet, I had no tangible path to the 'C-Suite' and, of more personal importance, to effective guidance on how to birth a program for families under stress that has lain dormant in my heart for decades. RELISH has opened the door to purposeful conversation and direction toward fulfilling my dream. The feedback of my one-on-one mentor, interaction with a great cohort of peer leaders, and the real-life experiences and scenarios from industry experts who are 'people of color' and understand the journey, have been a feast of vision-making for me."

"I have been thrilled to work with other Black leaders and the Supportive Housing Network of New York to launch the inaugural class of the Readyng Emerging Leaders in Supportive Housing Program (RELISH)," **said Nicole Clare, Chief Real Estate Development Officer, BRC.** "We seek to help each participant increase their knowledge base and deepen their professional networks, with the goal of diversifying nonprofit executive teams. I am confident this motivated group of professionals, who bring their personal lived experiences and great love for the industry, will inspire their staff and the clients that we serve."

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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.