



**Testimony to the New York City Council
General Welfare Committee
Submitted by Laura Mascuch, Supportive Housing Network of New York
April 20, 2017**

As the Executive Director of the Supportive Housing Network of New York and I a one of the Co-Chairs of the NYC Coalition on the Continuum of Care (CCoC), I support bill number 1460 to broaden the Interagency Coordinating Council to combat homelessness to include a co-chair of the CCoC, as well as stakeholders who have experienced homelessness.

The Supportive Housing Network of New York is a membership organization of approximately 200 nonprofit developers, owners, and providers of supportive housing statewide. Collectively, there are 50,000 units of supportive housing in the state and 32,000 in New York City. Supportive housing represents a critical component of ending homelessness, offering permanent housing solutions with wraparound social services for homeless individuals and families with special needs. Over the next fifteen years, the NYC 15/15 initiative will create 15,000 new units of supportive housing. An additional 20,000 units will be created through the state's Empire State Supportive Housing program.

The NYC Coalition on the Continuum of Care (CCoC) is a body of city and state government officials, housing and homeless service providers, both homeless and formerly homeless people, various provider membership coalitions representing a broad range of constituencies which include domestic violence, runaway and homeless youth, people living with HIV, seniors, those with mental illness and other behavioral health issues as well as other key stakeholders with the primary purpose of coordinating New York City's annual application for HUD's McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance funding. Over the last several years, the CCoC has received between \$107 million and \$120 million per year of HUD funding, which has been allocated to permanent supportive housing, rapid re-housing, and transitional housing. The CCoC also receives direct technical assistance and guidance on policy issues from HUD and HUD consultants. In 2016, the CCoC was awarded \$600,000 to fund a city-wide Coordinated Assessment and Placement System.

The CCoC is comprised of a number of working committees which include the Consumer Committee and the Youth Advisory Board, which includes people with lived experience of homelessness as well as the Policy & Advocacy, the Youth, Evaluation and the Performance & Quality Improvement Committees.

The CCoC is involved in sharing information about and implementing important federal policies. For example, the CCoC arranged for a HUD briefing for local providers about the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act, an amendment to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which – among other things – changed HUD's definition of homelessness and chronic

homelessness, increased resources for prevention, and increased emphasis on performance. The Youth Committee helped coordinate the first Homeless Youth Count and provides technical assistance to runaway and homeless youth providers in implementing Housing First policies, which incorporate harm reduction principles and posits that an individual cannot properly address health and wellness issues without first having a stable place to live.

The CCoC has formed a steering committee in 2015 to devise and implement a coordinated entry system, known in New York City as the Coordinated Assessment and Placement System (CAPS). This is a HUD mandate with a requirement to implement by January 2018. CAPS will ensure that, regardless of a person's entry point into the homeless system, their needs will be evaluated consistently. The system will incorporate a vulnerability index, as specified by HUD guidance and one of the key recommendations made by the Mayor's Supportive Housing Task Force: "Target units to three broad populations – adults, families, and youth – and incorporate a vulnerability index to target housing to those most in need." This is one of the many ways the CCoC serves as an important bridge between federal and local priorities in the City's response to homelessness.

The CCoC also plays an important role in coordinating with state efforts to end homelessness. When the Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative (ESSHI) launched in 2016, the NYC CCoC ensured that the ESSHI Request for Proposals required proposers across the state to align their projects with needs identified by their local CCoCs. Because of the important role the CCoC plays with our federal partners and because of its existing broad representation of stakeholders, we believe it is critical for any interagency coordinating council on homelessness to require participation from the CCoC.

While President Trump proposed in his budget request the elimination of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, which coordinates 19 federal agencies in an effort to end homelessness nationwide, we must continue to assert the importance of breaking down silos and working together on this complex and devastating issue. I commend Council Members Levin, Salamanca, Richards, Barron, Menchaca and Rosenthal for recognizing the need for a local interagency coordinating council that incorporates more stakeholders and emphasizes transparency and information sharing. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to continuing to work toward coordinated solutions to homelessness in my role as one of the Co-Chairs of the NYC CCoC.

Respectfully submitted by:

*Laura Mascuch
Executive Director
Supportive Housing Network of New York
247 West 37th Street, 18th Floor
New York, NY 10018
646-619-9641
lmascuch@shnny.org*