

Hon. Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor
State of New York
Executive Chamber
New York State Capitol
Albany, New York 12224

November 12, 2020

Dear Governor Cuomo:

Nearly four years ago, we gathered at the State Capitol to thank you and State lawmakers for investing a historic \$1 billion to build 6,000 homes for the most vulnerable homeless individuals and families over five years. This investment fulfilled the first phase of your commitment to create 20,000 units of supportive housing across New York State over 15 years – the largest commitment to supportive housing in history.

We continue to be alarmed, as we know you are, by the sustained magnitude of homelessness in New York State, and the attendant human and financial costs to our communities. The urgency of addressing homelessness has only been magnified amidst the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, which has dramatically underscored the fact that housing literally is health care. The economic upheaval caused by the public health crisis has already led to increased homelessness among single adults and, without sustained Federal investment, threatens to destabilize hundreds of thousands of households across New York State as evictions resume.¹ Furthermore, as we bring overdue focus to the legacy and impact of racial inequity, it is important to acknowledge that people of color are at greater risk of housing instability, homelessness, and serious COVID-19 illness.

Even before the pandemic, the New York City shelter census reached new record levels, particularly among single adults. As of August 2020, the number of single adults staying in city shelters climbed to a new record high of 19,683, up more than 120 percent from 2010. Also of great concern is that on any given night there are roughly 11,000 people experiencing homelessness in the rest of the state. Simultaneously, the demand for supportive housing remains extremely high: Presently, there are five approved supportive housing applications for each vacancy, even as the pipeline for new State-funded units is accelerating. The investments to date have been critical, but more is needed.

In recognition of this unprecedented need, and the necessity of moving more homeless New Yorkers into supportive housing more quickly given the pandemic and record homelessness, we call on you to include the following in your 2021-22 Executive Budget proposal:

1. A capital appropriation to fully support the 14,000 supportive housing units yet to be funded from your commitment to provide 20,000 units of supportive housing statewide, along with annual allocations of service and operating funds needed to support this housing as it is completed; and

¹ Estimation of Households Experiencing Rental Shortfall and Potentially Facing Eviction, via: <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiNzRhYjg2NzAtMGE1MC00NmNjLTllOTMtYjM2NjFmOTA4ZjMyIiwidCI6Ijc5MGJmNjk2LTE3NDYtNGE4OS1hZjI0LTc4ZGE5Y2RhZGE2MSIsImMiOjN9>

2. Acceleration of the supportive housing pipeline by 200 additional units per year, for a total of 1400 units per year over the next ten years.

The completion of the first phase of the State's 20,000-unit plan is now upon us. Therefore, it is critical to include language and an appropriation in the Executive Budget to signal to investors, nonprofits, syndicators, and developers that the out-year commitment to fund this promised and much-needed housing is real. Without a financial commitment in the upcoming budget, there will be another halt in production like that which took place between NY/NY III and ESSHI in 2015 and 2016 due to the absence of a long-term supportive housing commitment. Nonprofits and developers will stop buying sites, and many investors as well as syndicators will be unwilling to invest without concrete assurances that the program will continue.

ESSHI has been a successful supportive housing program because of the long-term funding outlined in the State budget. An appropriation in this year's budget will prevent history from repeating itself and ensure ESSHI's continued success in the years ahead. Investing in housing can help stimulate New York's economic recovery while simultaneously meeting the needs of its most vulnerable residents.

The problem of homelessness has reached a critical juncture, and the costs to our communities are unsustainable. It is time to boldly address record homelessness. Thank you for your attention to this important issue. We will reach out to the Executive Chamber to schedule a meeting to follow up on these requests.

Very truly yours,

Campaign for NY/NY Housing Steering Committee

Association for Community Living, Inc.

Center for Urban Community Services

Coalition for the Homeless

Community Access

Concern for Independent Living

CSH

Enterprise Community Partners, Inc.

Good Shepherd Services

Homeless Services United, Inc.

Housing Works

Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing

Jericho Project

NYS Council of Churches

The Coalition for Behavioral Health

The Supportive Housing Network of New York

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