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December 8, 2017

The Honorable Robert Menendez
528 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Cc: Rebecca Schatz

Dear Senator Menendez,

We are writing to express our commitment to ending homelessness in New Jersey and ask for your support. A \$217 million increase to \$2.6 billion in FY 18 funding for the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants program would house approximately 40,000 more people than last year nationally. This funding increase would allow New Jersey to make significant progress toward ending homelessness.

We urge you to fund the McKinney-Vento at least at \$2.6 billion in FY 2018. We Thank you for your continued leadership and for championing the cause of ending homelessness.

NJCounts 2017, the statewide point in time count of the homeless, found 8,532 homeless men, women and children, in 6,340 households, across the state of New Jersey. This number decreased by 409 persons (4.6%) from 2016. NJCounts 2017 counted individuals who were homeless on the night of January 24, 2017. This number includes some of the most vulnerable members of our community - veterans, families with children, chronically homeless people with disabilities, and unaccompanied youth.

The increasing gap between incomes and rents affects many members of our community. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition's Out of Reach Report, in New Jersey, a family must earn an hourly wage of \$27.31, far more than the state's average hourly wage of \$17.86 or the \$8.41 minimum wage. The Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a two- bedroom rental in New Jersey is \$1,420/month. A family must earn \$56,810 annually to make this affordable. A minimum wage worker would have to work 129 hours per week year-round to be able to afford a two-bedroom home at FMR.

New Jersey employs evidence-based approaches that move people quickly into permanent housing. These approaches are consistently supported and incentivized by Congress and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD.)

The progress in ending homelessness in New Jersey results from a broad community effort. This effort includes a systemic approach from our Continuum of Care (CoC) leadership, support from local and state government, buy-in from private and public stakeholders, and generosity from local and state-level philanthropy. Federal funding provided by HUD's McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants program and other targeted homeless assistance programs is central to this effort. This funding is essential in our fight against homelessness.

Allowing people to remain unsheltered and unsafe on the streets, or to cycle through costly crisis systems, is immoral and expensive. We are grateful for the federal funding provided to allow New Jersey to respond to the crisis of homelessness, and are particularly appreciative of the \$133 million increase to McKinney-Vento in the FY 17 spending bill. However, our work is not done, and we need your increased investment to continue our progress. Current federal funding levels, even when strategically leveraged locally, will not be sufficient for us to meet the rising numbers of people experiencing in our community.

Thank you for your continued leadership and for championing the cause of ending homelessness.

Sincerely,

Organizations

Atlantic County Government

Bridges Outreach, Inc.

Catholic Charities Diocese of Metuchen

Catholic Charities

Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey

Coming Home of Middlesex County

Community Hope, Inc.

Elizabeth Coalition to House the Homeless

Family Promise of Morris County

Family Promise of Union County

Fleet Reserve Association Northeast/New England Region

Garden State Episcopal Community Development Corporation

Green Party of Morris, Sussex, and Warren Counties

Haven House, INC

Homeless Solutions, Inc.

Housing & Community Development Network of NJ

Mental Health Association in New Jersey

Mercer Alliance to End Homelessness

MHANJ

Monarch Housing Associates

Montclair State University

Neighborhood Assistance Office

Newark Homes For All Coalition

NewBridge Services, Inc.
NJ 2-1-1 Partnership
Ocean Mental Health Services
Operation Warm Heart - First Presbyterian Church of Cranford Chapter
Port Elizabeth United Methodist Women
Project Live, Inc.
Rutgers University
Sanctuary Foundation For Veterans
Solstice Counseling and Wellness Center
Supportive Housing Association of NJ
The Affordable Homes Group
Triple C Housing, Inc.

United Way of Monmouth and Ocean Counties

Individuals

Noreen Best, Retired
Kkarina Almonte, Unaffiliated