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**Over 350 NJ Advocates Tell Congress: #NoHousingCuts**

*Housing and homelessness advocates meet with NJ Congressional delegation in Washington, DC*

July 13, 2016 – Today, over 350 advocates traveled to Washington, DC to meet with New Jersey Congressional delegates regarding investments for housing and homelessness prevention. Advocates urged legislators to oppose spending cuts to programs that reduce access to affordable homes for NJ residents.

“NJ has an affordable homes crisis that is causing more families to double up and many are falling through the cracks and becoming homeless,” said Richard W. Brown, CEO of Monarch Housing Associates. “It is time to stop the cuts to housing programs and make sure everyone has a safe, affordable place to call home.”

“NJ’s economy has languished after Sandy and the economic downturn. Too many NJ residents struggle to pay their rent or mortgage,” said Staci Berger, president and chief executive officer of the Housing and Community Development Network of NJ. “We need our representatives in Congress to put resources into making more homes affordable for more people. Now is not the time to cut housing resources in their budgets.”

Advocates convened in the Dirksen Senate Office Building and spoke directly with Senators Cory Booker and Robert Menendez and New Jersey’s twelve members of the House of Representatives about issues facing NJ renters and homeowners. Individuals who have experienced homelessness and live in each of New Jersey’s 12 congressional districts also shared their stories spoke to their Senators and Representatives.

Theresa Pringle lives in a homeless shelter in Newark, in the district of Congressman Donald Payne, Jr. (D-10), and has been homeless for a year. In April 2016, she had to leave a shelter where she was staying at the time and lived on the street and on the river, moving place to place. She became part of an “underground” group of people staying in Newark’s Penn Station. Says Theresa, the mother of six children, “I don’t wish this on anybody.” She expects to move in to her own apartment within a month.

Richard Corlies, who is 71-years-old, has lived in his supportive housing apartment in Elizabeth New Jersey, in the district of Congressman Albio Sires (D-8) for almost four years. He served in Vietnam and became addicted to alcohol and drugs and lost his marriage and house. After a stay in the Veterans Affairs East Orange hospital, he has now been clean and sober for three years and volunteers at an animal shelter. “To have a roof over your head is everything,” says Richard.

Susan Parker has lived in Lumberton, New Jersey, district of Congressman Tom MacArthur (R-3), in a supportive housing apartment for 7 years. Before moving into her own apartment, she experienced a very brief period of homelessness after leaving an abusive marriage. She now works for Catholic Charities as a peer advocate and says, "I am your tax dollars at work."

In 2008, Margaret Upchurch, also a constituent of Congressman MacArthur, lost the job that she had held for 21 years and her home out of state. After recovering from a mental health crisis and moving into an apartment in Seaside Heights, on October 29, 2012 when Superstorm Sandy hit, she became homeless for the second time. For the past year, she has struggled to rent a house with her two sons in Barnegat, New Jersey. She receives \$2,100/month through the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) program but pays \$1,500 in rent. She says, "The hardest thing about paying such high rent is not being able to buy food or pay her utilities." Without food pantries, she says they would all "starve."

"Those of us who have never been homeless may think of it in the abstract," says Cory Storch, CEO of Bridgeway Rehabilitation Services. "We are bringing formerly homeless people with us to educate our federal representatives about how real the problem is and on real, cost effective solutions." Bridgeway is a sponsor of the event.

"I will be in Washington DC on July 13 to carry the message 'No Cuts for Housing' because 70% of people coming to our feeding programs make choices between housing and food every day and we need to reduce that number not increase it," said Diane Riley, advocacy director for the Community Food Bank of New Jersey.

The Policy Priorities for the Congressional Reception include:

- Support a \$414 million increase to \$2.644B for HUD's McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Support HOME Investment Partnerships: Restore funding for the HOME Investment Partnerships program (HOME) to \$1.2 billion
- Support \$20.9 billion for Housing Choice Vouchers to help reduce family homelessness.
- Ensure Funding for the National Housing Trust Fund (NHTF),
- Expand the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC), and
- Push for Stricter Lead Standards.

The event was hosted by Monarch Housing Associates and the Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey. To learn more about the #NoHousingCuts effort, visit <http://monarchhousing.org/tag/hill-day/>