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Marc L. Greenberg

Memorandum in Support

February 10, 2020

Re: A. 1620 and S.2375

AN ACT to amend the social services law, in relation to home stability support programs. The Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing Coalition strongly supports this legislation which was developed to prevent homelessness and its most solvable causes through the provision of State and Federally-funded rent supplements for public assistance households. We applaud the Coalition for the Homeless who participated in the development of this Home Stability Support (HSS) proposal with the sponsors, and the experts representing the Legal Aid Society, Empire Justice Center, and NYS Coalition Against Domestic Violence. It is widely supported by dozens of members of the Legislature from both houses and both sides of the aisle, as well as scores of other elected officials at every level of government, and over 140 community groups and faith leaders.

The bill would create a new Section 131-bb of the Social Services Law to authorize the provision of rent supplements to those public assistance households who are homeless, as well as those at risk of becoming homeless due to eviction, domestic violence, or hazardous conditions in the home. By providing housing assistance to help these households afford market rents, the program would help thousands of individuals and families to retain their homes, and at the same time help thousands of others to relocate from costly shelters, crowded double-ups, and places unfit for human habitation, to homes of their own. It would also offer support services to help individuals and families find and keep their homes.

There are over 63,092 homeless people staying in NYC shelters each night and 250,000 homeless people statewide each year. Based on City and State reports 23,000 more New Yorkers become homeless each year than exit homelessness. This level of homelessness is unsustainable and far too costly for the poorest New Yorkers and taxpayers alike. By preventing and resolving homelessness simultaneously, HSS would have the power to reduce the number of people in shelters by 60 percent in NYC, and foster true housing stability for those whose homelessness is rooted in the economics of private housing costs that far exceed the incomes of those receiving public assistance.

Ultimately, HSS would more than pay for itself in savings from reduced evictions, shorter shelter stays, reduced public service costs associated with homelessness, and increased housing stability for public assistance households. For the foregoing reasons, the Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing strongly favors this legislation and urges its adoption.

Marc L. Greenberg
Executive Director

Decent and Affordable Housing is a Basic Human Right