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New Coalition Launches to Hold Mayoral and Council Candidates Accountable for Advancing Solutions to Homelessness

Group of over 100 organizations releases policy platform to address crisis, advocates for inclusion of stakeholders in policy decisions beyond election

New York, NY – Today, over 100 homeless advocates, providers, and other organizations from across the city launched a coalition – United to End Homelessness – to help address the homelessness crisis and hold 2013 mayoral and Council candidates accountable for advancing solutions. New York City’s next mayor and City Council will confront record levels of homelessness with over 57,000 people living in shelters or sleeping on City streets as of January, including more than 22,000 children.

“With NYC facing record homelessness, it’s critical that a new mayor and City Council take significant policy steps – together with other stakeholders – to stem the tide of misery in our city,” said **Mary Brosnahan, President & CEO of Coalition for the Homeless**. “In order to move us forward, it’s imperative that city leaders increase investment in programs and services proven to help move our homeless neighbors towards permanent housing and self-sufficiency. We must expect no less from the next administration and City Council.”

“Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York often receives more than 300 hundred calls a day from New Yorkers on the verge of becoming homeless,” said **Monsignor Kevin Sullivan, Executive Director of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York**. “Living with dignity in safe, decent housing is a basic human need. New York has been in the forefront of trying to ensure this right. Yet, despite this commitment in principle and with resources, too many residents of our City are homeless, doubled up or on the brink of becoming homeless. Preventing homelessness needs to be a high and ongoing priority for all New York’s institutions and sectors. As we approach the elections of a new Mayor, Comptroller, Public Advocate and City Council, preventing homelessness and ensuring safe, decent and affordable housing needs to be a central item on candidates’ agenda.”

United to End Homelessness formed to promote a unified vision to help create solutions for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness during the 2013 election and beyond. As part of its launch, the coalition put forward a platform to outline the necessary steps the next administration must take to help end the homelessness crisis. Its platform focuses on:

- Ensuring that fighting homelessness and expanding affordable housing is a top mayoral priority;
- Increasing funding for programs that prevent homelessness, like legal services, eviction and foreclosure prevention, and aftercare services for the formerly homeless;
- Expanding and improving housing assistance resources: create a new local rent subsidy for homeless people, reinstate and expand priority set-asides for the homeless in Federal, State,

and City programs, and redesign the City's system for placing extremely low-income and homeless households in set-aside units in tax credit buildings;

- Guaranteeing adequate shelter, health care and services for all people experiencing homelessness without deterrent or bureaucratic barriers;
- Continuing investments in supportive housing: ensure sufficient funding to fulfill the NY-NY III agreement, create a NY-NY IV agreement that increases the supply of housing units for homeless people, and ensure that existing supportive housing tenants continue to get the services they need by bringing contract rates up to current costs;
- Preserving and creating more affordable housing for New York's lowest income households;
- Improving planning around natural disaster-induced homelessness, integrating it into the City's overall strategy to assist homeless people regardless of the cause of homelessness
- Creating an interagency council on homelessness that includes government, non-profit, and consumer stakeholders to implement a comprehensive plan to end homelessness, unifying priorities by sharing data and resources across agencies to enhance system-wide efficiencies.

Read the full platform here: <http://endhomelessnessnyc.org/the-platform/>

The number of homeless New Yorkers in shelters each night has increased 58% since 2002, and the number of homeless families has increased 66% over the same period. An additional 5,000 people sleep each night in other shelters (including runaway and unaccompanied homeless youth, domestic violence survivors, and people living with AIDS), and thousands more sleep on the streets or in other public spaces. New York City's youth shelter system is overwhelmed and a record 80% of domestic violence emergency shelter residents are leaving with no safe place to go.

"Ending homelessness should be a top priority for the next administration and we look for the next Mayor to have a plan for doing so," said **Ted Houghton, Executive Director of the Supportive Housing Network of NY**. "Supportive housing – affordable housing linked to services – will be a major part of any successful plan: it is the most effective way to house those New Yorkers with disabilities or other barriers that make it hard for them to keep their homes. Supportive housing lets people live in hope and dignity, saves taxpayers millions of dollars in expensive emergency services, and replaces empty lots with beautiful new buildings. We stand with United to End Homelessness in calling for new policies that will finally put an end to homelessness in New York."

"Homelessness in New York City is a growing crisis that demands attention and action from our current government leaders, and from those who seek to lead our city," said **Jennifer Jones Austin, CEO/Executive Director of Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies**. "The 57,000 individuals experiencing homelessness today all have a right to a stable future, and all New Yorkers have a moral stake in making sure they achieve one. The Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies stands with community leaders, advocates, service providers, and children, individuals and families who are facing homelessness to demand that our city take the necessary steps to ensure that no one has to experience instability of this magnitude.

"Domestic violence can often force victims and their children into homelessness," said **Carol Corden, Executive Director of New Destiny Housing Corporation**. "80 percent of families leaving emergency domestic violence shelters have no safe place to go. We can and must do better to help New Yorkers find safe, stable homes. New Destiny is proud to support United to End Homelessness in its efforts to give homeless New Yorkers the respect and compassion they deserve."

"We can end homelessness," said **Bobby Watts, Executive Director of Care for the Homeless**. "Policy choices that were made resulted in this crisis, and better public policy can get us out of it, spare needless human suffering, better serve our communities and save significant tax dollars."

"With over 22,000 children sleeping in homeless shelters and hundreds of runaway and homeless youth being turned away because of a shortage of beds, it is critical that the City take immediate action to address the homelessness crisis," said **Jennifer March-Joly, Executive Director, Citizens' Committee for Children**. "CCC is proud to stand with United to End Homelessness today- to call on all current and future city leaders to address this crisis and better protect the health and well-being of NYC's homeless children and youth."

"We are experiencing a crisis in the availability of safe, affordable housing in the community" said **Phillip A. Saperia, CEO of The Coalition of Behavioral Health Agencies, Inc.** "People with severe mental illness and substance use issues, often accompanied by multiple chronic physical health problems, are especially vulnerable to becoming homeless in this environment. Access to housing with social supports, not only enables vulnerable people to live independently in the community with improved health and behavioral health outcomes, but at lower social and financial costs. Living in community housing is key to stabilizing people with medical and behavioral health problems. The intersection of behavioral health and homelessness needs to be addressed as a priority in the next Mayoral election."

None of these statistics include the thousands of New Yorkers displaced by Hurricane Sandy, many of whom were low-income and in need of long-term housing aid.

Compounding the harm caused to thousands of vulnerable children and adults, the City is paying a huge financial price for record homelessness. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2012, New York City spent more than \$908 million on shelter and services for homeless people, a 68% increase from FY 2002. In addition, New York City's housing affordability problems have worsened significantly over the past decade, putting more people at risk of homelessness. According to Census Bureau data, 55% of renter households are spending more than 30% of their income on rent, a one-third increase since 2000, and 28% of renters are spending more than half of their income on rent.

"Homelessness is an impediment to a person's success, which, in turn, is a drain on the City's vibrancy," said **Philip J. Malebranche**, a college graduate who has experienced long-term unemployment and chronic homelessness and is a member of the Consumer Advisory Board at Care for the Homeless. "Affordable housing, with supportive services, including health care, helps provide stability and well-being needed to move ahead. We should pay more attention to the moral aspect of the problems related to homelessness. Such high numbers of people without housing hinders New York's greatness."

"United to End Homeless has come together to address the homelessness crisis," said **Christy Parque, Executive Director, Homeless Services United**. "This crisis is untenable, and must be solved and we know how to do it. This coalition is New York City and the next Mayor's dream team to help them tackle this problem with permanent solutions and smart, cost effective policies."

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United to End Homelessness is endorsed by *Homeless Services United | Citizens' Committee for Children of New York | Supportive Housing Network of New York | New Destiny Housing | Coalition for the Homeless | Care for the Homeless | Enterprise Community Partners | Goddard Riverside Community Center | Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing | Habitat for Humanity - New York City | Human Services Council | HELP USA | The Coalition of Behavioral Health Agencies || Abyssinian Baptist Church | Aguila, Inc. | Alembic Community Development | ANHD | Barrier Free Living |*

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