Memorandum

To: Faith Leaders

From: NYS Council of Churches and Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing

Re: Faith Weekend on Alleviating Homelessness, Saturday, March 14 & Sunday, March 15

In every county in New York, we have far too many people who are homeless or precariously housed. As a faith community, we urge congregations to promote laws and policies to alleviate homelessness in their communities. A variety of approaches can help alleviate homelessness, including construction of affordable and supportive housing, home-repair and renovation, rent regulation, and revision of zoning laws to allow higher density housing to be constructed. One of the most humane and cost-effective approaches to directly address homelessness is to bridge the difference between government housing allowances and the actual rents that people pay for their housing. Shelters and motel rooms are not only very costly, but also only temporary: It can be destabilizing for families and individuals to live in them when what they really need are secure homes. Rent subsidies are the best option to offer immediate relief and cost far less in comparison to the shelter system which can cost up to $71,000 per family, per average shelter stay.

After many unsuccessful tries, the New York State Legislature is now on the precipice of passing Home Stability Support. We are encouraged by the bi-partisan support for HSS, which is sponsored by 129 members of the Assembly and 39 State Senators. At this crucial moment, we need the faith community to raise our voices in unison to support this legislation. On the weekend of March 14 and 15 we invite religious leaders to address the homeless crisis in their pulpits in light of their faith tradition and invite their parishioners to call on the Governor Cuomo to include this life giving legislation to alleviate homelessness as part of the state budget which must be approved on April 1.

According to Shelly Nortz, Deputy Executive Director of Policy for the Coalition of the Homeless:

“The FY2020 Fair Market Rent for a two-bedroom apartment in New York City is $1,951, but the public assistance shelter allowance for a typical family of three is only $400 per month. The set of currently available housing vouchers fall tragically short of filling this gap. HSS would require New York State to supplement these inadequate shelter allowances up to 85 percent of the Fair Market Rent. Localities would have the option to cover the additional amount needed to bring maximum rents up to 100 percent of Fair Market Rents as may be needed given local market conditions.

HSS supplements would be considerably less expensive than the $71,624 annual cost of emergency shelter for each family in New York City. As NYC Comptroller Scott M. Stringer projected in 2017, HSS could reduce New York City’s shelter population by 80 percent among families with children and 40 percent among single adults in a decade, saving New York City about $316 million in its tenth year through foregone shelter costs and streamlined services. The State has largely left localities to fund shelters and preventive services on their own in recent years, so the State’s investment in HSS would represent a long-overdue course correction. All levels of government must work together to tackle homelessness.”

Please go to [https://sayyestohss.org](https://sayyestohss.org) to send a letter to the Governor and Post on Facebook and Twitter in support of HSS.