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UPDATED PRESS RELEASE

City Council Passes Resolution Backing Affordable Housing For Low-Income New Yorkers With HIV/AIDS

Resolution Sends Strong Signal To Albany To Pass Legislation That Would Prevent 11,000 New Yorkers From Losing Their Homes

New York – People with HIV/AIDS and housing providers praised City Council for adopting a resolution (2145-2009) calling on state leaders to pass affordable housing legislation that would help prevent nearly 11,000 New Yorkers from losing their homes. Speaker Christine and Council Member Rosie Mendez introduced the resolution and spoke at a press conference with advocates earlier in the day.

"This piece of legislation will not only save money for our state, but it will save money for the thousands of HASA clients and provide some vital relief for their pocketbooks. I urge Speaker Sheldon Silver and Governor David Paterson to support this bill so we can take action towards making HASA clients' lives easier and more affordable," said Speaker Christine Quinn.

"The New York State legislature must act to correct this blatant injustice. Why should people with AIDS be the only group required to pay more than 30% of income for subsidized housing? People with AIDS can not maintain their health when they are in constant threat of losing their homes. Passage of this legislation is the humane and the fiscally prudent thing to do," said Council Member Rosie Mendez.

The legislation, introduced by Senator Tom Duane and Assembly Member Deborah Glick (S.2664/A.2565), would ensure clients of NYC's HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA) pay no more than 30 percent of their income towards rent. According to an independent cost study, the bill would save the city and state \$12 million annually by reducing emergency shelter costs.

Although it passed the Senate in a near unanimous vote on July 16, 2009, it remains bottled up in the Assembly Ways & Means Committee. Advocates say that unless Assembly Speaker Silver and Governor Paterson support the bill, thousands of New Yorkers with HIV/AIDS could lose their homes over the next year.

"In a time of economic crisis, we want Speaker Silver and Governor Paterson to recognize this legislation for what it is – an opportunity to save money for our

government *and* save homes for low-income New Yorkers,” said Gustavo Pedroza, campaign leader with the NYC AIDS Housing Network (NYCAHN) who pays 67% of his Social Security Disability (SSD) check towards rent each month.

HASA’s rental assistance program is the state’s only disability housing program that does not cap the tenant’s rent contribution at 30 percent of income. Instead, nearly 11,000 clients are required to contribute all but \$344 of their income towards rent each month, leaving them with about \$11 per day for all other expenses. This policy forces HASA clients to make difficult trade-offs foregoing basic necessities to pay rent each month, while many fall behind in arrears and lose their homes.

“HASA’s rental assistance program doesn’t leave me with enough money to clothe myself, get toiletries or make co-payments when I have medical appointments. Sometimes I even have to cancel primary care appointments because I can’t afford to get there,” said Wanda Hernandez, a NYCAHN campaign leader who pays 71% of her SSD check towards rent each month.

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