

# NEW JERSEY ADVOCACY NETWORK TO END HOMELESSNESS

December 2, 2008

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OF NEW JERSEY

President-Elect Barack Obama  
Presidential Transition Team  
5<sup>th</sup> and D St. NW  
Washington, DC 20270

Dear President-Elect Obama:

We congratulate you on your election as the next President of the United States. As you move forward with your agenda, we urge you to give priority to the needs of America's most vulnerable population – homeless persons.

The recent spikes in mortgage foreclosures and economic downturn have created a surge in demand for shelter and social services. As many as 3.5 million people are homeless over the course of a year, including 1.35 million children. Your strong leadership is needed to end this crisis. Solutions to address homelessness exist and they are centered on affordable housing, supportive services for those who need them, and adequate incomes. These solutions recognize that homelessness is more than just a charitable concern, but an issue of basic human rights that affects the overall wellbeing of our country.

We appreciate your leadership in the Senate to prevent homelessness among veterans, through your sponsorship of the Homes for Heroes Act, and Vice President-Elect Biden's leadership in the Senate to prevent domestic violence survivors from becoming homeless, through the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act.

As leaders of the movement to end homelessness in New Jersey, we call upon you to build on this work by committing to take, and ask the Congress to take, these six key steps to move us significantly towards the goal of ending homelessness in America:

## **1. Commit to End Homelessness—Now**

During the first year of your Administration, hold a White House Conference on Homelessness at which a federal, interagency plan to end homelessness in the United States is presented. The plan should have concrete goals and timelines.

## **2. Increase Access to Affordable Housing**

Fund at least 150,000 new housing vouchers each year to help address the critical shortage of rental housing affordable to people with extremely low incomes who are homeless or at risk of homelessness; create and sustain 90,000 additional units of permanent supportive housing; add 20,000 new HUD-VASH vouchers and 40,000 new units of permanent supportive housing for veterans who are homeless or at risk; fully fund the housing programs created by the Violence Against Women Act; increase funding for the National Housing Trust Fund, and provide 19,000 vouchers for homeless families under the Family Unification Program. Further, prevent low-income people from becoming homeless as a result of the current foreclosure crisis by providing \$575 million in emergency funding to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to use to assist tenants displaced by foreclosure.

### **3. Ensure Adequate Incomes**

Ensure that every American has an annual income—whether through wages, public income assistance, tax credits, or a combination thereof—sufficient to obtain and maintain permanent housing that costs no more than 30 percent of the household's income.

### **4. Expand Access to Health Services**

Ensure that your health care plan guarantees access and eliminates all financial barriers to comprehensive health services – including mental health care – for all Americans, and enact Medicaid policies that allow reimbursement for effective services that help reduce the use of more costly emergency and hospital care.

### **5. Ensure Access to Education for Homeless Children and Youth**

By 2010, strengthen educational access and stability for homeless children and youth, including young children and unaccompanied youth, through the reauthorization and the full funding of the education title of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, and expanded access to Head Start.

### **6. Protect Homeless People from Discrimination**

Homeless persons' civil rights to vote, to frequent public places, to utilize public facilities, and to enjoy equal protection of the law must be supported and advanced.

We urge you to adopt these recommendations as a first step towards ending homelessness in America. A more detailed explanation of the recommendations and their rationale is enclosed. We stand ready to assist you and your staff. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you or your staff.

For more information, please contact Richard W. Brown, Chair, New Jersey Advocacy Network to End Homelessness, at 908-272-5363, x225.

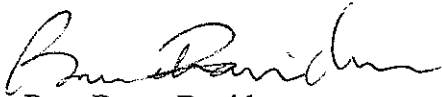
Respectfully,



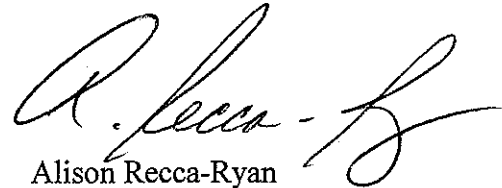
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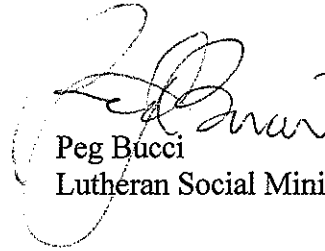
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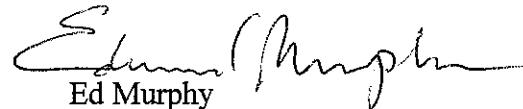
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