January, 2016

Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of the State of New York
NYS Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Honorable Bill de Blasio
Mayor of the City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Governor Cuomo and Mayor de Blasio:

As Faith Leaders from many faith traditions, from throughout New York City and State, we write to you to express our support for strengthening and extending the supportive housing plan known as New York/New York and join the Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing and more than 200 state and local organizations to call for a new City-State supportive housing initiative – the Campaign 4 New York/New York Housing - calling on Governor Cuomo to provide, in partnership with Mayor de Blasio and New York City and with other localities, 35,000 new units of supportive housing statewide for the most vulnerable New Yorkers. As you are both aware, we are at a crossroads in dealing with our large homeless populations. Permanent supportive housing is needed in particular for individuals and families with serious social service needs who face an uphill battle to find and maintain permanent, affordable housing and get off the streets.

At the very heart of each of our faith traditions is the call to stand with the most vulnerable members of our human family. In fact the very first special needs supportive housing program in New York was the St. Francis Friends of the Poor – for mentally disabled adults - established in 1980. Many members of our homeless population are our most vulnerable New Yorkers, including and especially those living with crippling mental illness. With 60,000 people in New York City homeless today, and 80,000 statewide – and given that only one out of six of the 20,000 approved applicants for supportive housing annually actually receive a housing placement due to the severe lack of available units, it is imperative that we all work together to establish a new City/State supportive housing agreement that fully funds the creation of 35,000 supportive housing units throughout New York State.

A strong permanent supportive housing agreement will send a powerful signal to members of our congregations and the general public, advocates and stakeholders and the entire country that New York is serious in its determination to end homelessness – and will help to affirm the public’s faith that Government is committed to help all citizens to live full and decent lives. New Yorkers look to both of you for your continued strong leadership on this issue.

We look forward to hearing from each of you as to what your administration will do with regard to this most important of issues.

In Faith,
Father John Felice, Founder/Co-Director, St. Francis Friends of the Poor, Manhattan
Father John McVean, Founder/Co-Director, St. Francis Friends of the Poor, Manhattan
Father Tom Walters, Founder/Co-Director, St. Francis Friends of the Poor, Manhattan
Bishop Howard Hubbard, Bishop Emeritus, Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany
Bishop Robert Alan Rimbo, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Metropolitan New York Synod
Bishop Lawrence Provenzano, Episcopal Diocese of Long Island
Rabbi Joseph Ptasnik, Executive V.P., NY Board of Rabbis
Bishop Jane Allen Middleton, New York Annual Conference United Methodist Church
Bishop James O. Stallings, American Baptist Churches of Metropolitan New York
Reverend Robert Foltz-Morrison, Executive Presbyter, Presbytery of New York City
Reverend Michael S. Bos, Senior Minister, West End Collegiate Church, President, Collegiate Church of New York
Reverend Krystin Granberg, Moderator, Presbytery of New York City
Reverend Peter Cook, Executive Director, New York State Council of Churches, Albany
Morris Gurley, President, New York City Council of Churches
Reverend Skip L’Heureux, Executive Director, Queens Federation of Churches
Reverend Thomas Goodhue, Executive Director, Long Island Council of Churches, Hempstead
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Reverend Fred Davie, Exec. VP, Union Theological Seminary, Manhattan
Reverend Dr. James A. Forbes, National Minister, Drum Major Institute
Reverend Dr. Donald W. Shriver, Jr., President Emeritus, Union Theological Seminary, Manhattan
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Dr. Anne Klaeysen, Leader, New York Society for Ethical Culture
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Reverend John H. Vaughn, Executive Vice President, Auburn Seminary, Manhattan
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Dhanpal Narine, President, Shri Trimurti Bhavan Hindu Temple, Queens
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Imam Mouhamed M. Sakho, President, Islamic Cultural Foundation of America (ICFA)
Imam Shamsi Ali, Spiritual Leader, Jamaica Muslim Center
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Bishop Andrew St. John, Rector, Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration, Manhattan

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Deacon Dennis Barton, Middle Collegiate Church, Manhattan
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Rabbi Ayelet S. Cohen, Manhattan
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Reverend Sandy Damhof, Pastor, Journey United Methodist Church of Christ, Albany
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Reverend Karen Davis-Lawson, St. George Episcopal Church, Queens
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Reverend Andrew Wilkes, Executive Director, The Drum Institute
Pastor Nathan Winstead, Associate Pastor, Everyday Christian Church, Manhattan
Reverend Dustin Wright, Pastor, Messiah Lutheran Church, Schenectady
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