



# ACTION ALERT

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A non-profit tax-exempt organization representing New York City's community-based mental health sector.

## Campaign for NY/NY 2

### *A Call to Action*

As leaders in the mental health community, you are well aware of the critical need for more housing for the homeless and at-risk mentally ill consumers. The Campaign for New York/New York II is working to address this need by advocating for the renewal of the New York/New York Agreement to House Homeless Mentally Ill Individuals. The goal of this effort is to get Governor Pataki to include funding for 10,000 units, of which half would be new construction, in his budget.

The Coalition is a primary participant in this important campaign to renew the successful New York/New York Agreement to House Homeless Mentally Ill Individuals. We are appealing to you as a leader of your organization to publicly endorse this campaign. Over the next several months, The Coalition will be actively engaged in the campaign. This is the first of many actions that will be required in order to succeed.

We need to raise the visibility of this critical issue. The budget and legislative cycle are nearly upon us, in addition to the next election cycle. The window of opportunity to promote, inform and apply pressure is now open. We need to push forward.

#### **ACTION REQUESTED:**

Attached is the Statement of Purpose and sample letter. Please use them and pass them on to colleagues, clients and friends. Our goal is send 15,000 letters to Governor Pataki and other officials by December 19<sup>th</sup>. The following is a list of officials who need to be reached:

Governor George E. Pataki  
The Executive Chamber  
State Capitol  
Albany, NY 12224

Senator Joseph L. Bruno  
Senate Majority Leader  
909 LOB  
Albany, NY 12247

Speaker Sheldon Silver  
Assembly Speaker  
932 LOB  
Albany, NY 11248

Hon. Thomas W. Libous  
Chair, Committee on Mental Health  
and Developmental Disabilities  
815 LOB  
Albany, NY 11247

Hon. James F. Brennan  
Chair, Committee on Mental Health  
826 LOB  
Albany, NY 11248

Commissioner James L. Stone  
State Office of Mental Health  
44 Holland Avenue  
Albany, NY 12229

## **The Campaign for NY/NY II**

### **Statement of Purpose**

November 1997

**The Campaign for New York/New York II** has come together with a single shared vision:

New York City and the State of New York must renew the landmark *New York/New York Agreement to House Homeless Mentally Ill Individuals* and expand its scope to include 10,000 units of housing within the next five years.

Half of these new units should be included in new development pipelines and half created through rental subsidy programs, such as the OMH supported housing program, or other cost-effective models.

Further, the scope of the next New York/New York agreement should be expanded to include both homeless people with psychiatric disabilities and persons with psychiatric disabilities who are at risk of becoming homeless.

Government must take the opportunity to act now to renew this historic agreement for several reasons:

1. By any measure, the NY/NY agreement worked. Over 7,500 homeless people with chronic mental illness found homes. The supported housing models that have flourished as a result of this initiative are being replicated nationally. Retention rates for tenants, most of whom have never had a permanent home, are over 60% after two years.
2. The need remains. Each month, more than 150 new applicants are approved by the City for a shrinking number of NY/NY units, where vacancy rates hover at less than 3%. Overall, the city estimates that we need 30,000 more supported housing units for people with chronic mental illness, including 15,000 for people who are homeless. To compound this problem, the Office of Mental Health will be shrinking the state hospital system by another 1,500 to 2,500 beds within the next five years.
3. Supported housing is a cost-effective public policy solution. Without supported housing, homeless people with chronic mental illness remain “housed” in city and state hospital wards, the shelter system, expensive transitional living programs, drop-in centers and our streets. Recent studies have shown that tenants living in supported housing have moved from a life of institutional dependency to one that includes employment, job training and education.
4. The NY/NY agreement leveraged millions of dollars in private sector funding in the form of low income housing tax credits, job training programs, corporate donations — both cash and in-kind business loans and sales and income taxes generated by new jobs.
5. Government has both the responsibility and the financial resources to act now. The original NY/NY Agreement was conceived during a period of extreme fiscal austerity. The initiative made eminent financial sense then, and it makes even more sense now. Its signers envisioned that the Agreement, if successful, would be renewed and expanded after 5 years. That the Agreement was a success is unquestioned: all that is lacking is the commitment of our elected officials to do what is just, fair and sensible for our most vulnerable citizens.

**Renew the New York/New York Agreement Now!**

## Sample Letter

Date:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

I am writing to you as a member of The Coalition of Voluntary Mental Health Agencies, Inc and the Campaign for New York/New York II, an alliance of New York City and State mental health providers, consumers and advocates. We are concerned about the critical need to develop new housing and services for individuals with psychiatric disabilities who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

As our enclosed Statement of Purpose indicates, the *New York/ New York Agreement to House the Mentally Ill*, signed by the City and State of New York in 1990, has been hailed as an unequivocally successful and cost effective program. To date, over 7,500 individuals have been housed in New York/ New York designated sites. While the Agreement has vastly improved the quality of life for thousands of New Yorkers, there are still many more individuals who await the housing and services necessary to reintegrate back into our communities.

The Coalition of Voluntary Mental Health Agencies, Inc. and the Campaign for New York/New York II calls upon the State and City governments to renew and fully fund the landmark New York/New York Agreement in order to continue addressing the needs of our most vulnerable population.

I would appreciate hearing your position on this issue.

Very truly yours,