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GOVERNOR'S CUTS TO THE ILLINOIS STATE BUDGET SURE TO CUT HOUSING FOR 965 HOMELESS PEOPLE

CHICAGO, IL -- Governor Rod Blagojevich cut \$4 million July 9th from the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) budget as a measure to help balance the Illinois State budget. This funding is needed for services in new supportive housing that will save over **900 people from homelessness**, according to Britt Shawver, Executive Director of Housing Opportunities for Women.

"The money cut from the state budget represents funding that directly improves the lives of the homeless," Shawver said. "Reinstating these dollars into the state budget is paramount for our organization and others like it. These dollars will help us bring stability to the lives of families who through no fault of their own are homeless."

Juanita Robinson, a 45-year-old formerly homeless woman, has been living in housing provided by HOW for 5 years. Robinson has been substance-free for the past five years. She

works full-time and cares for her three children, ages 11, 14 and 16. She is also attending school working toward a degree. At one point, DCFS took Robinson's children away from her. "I could not be reunited with my children until I had a place to live and had a job. HOW helped me get both," Robinson said. In addition to housing services, HOW found funding through direct service assistance to send Robinson's youngest son, who is deaf, to a special camp for the hearing impaired. Robinson's oldest son participates in the City of Chicago's After School Matters programming, facilitated by HOW. This program keeps teens off the streets through educational and artistic programming

Restoring funding for Supportive Housing is imperative because Supportive Housing:

- Ends the expensive cycle of homelessness, specifically for those who struggle with mental illness, giving them both independence and support;
- Helps people stay or become clean and sober; and
- Allows those who are able to secure jobs and rejoin the tax rolls.

Supportive housing costs the state less per person per year than state-funded Institutions for Mental Disease (IMDs) or prisons. IMD's cost over \$24, 634 per person annually. The average cost per inmate housed in an Illinois prison in 2005 was \$21,622. **Yet**, the average annual cost per person in general revenue funds for supportive housing services is **\$5,000**.

Located in Rogers Park, HOW has provided permanent supportive housing for homeless women and their children since 1983. Last year, HOW tripled the number of low-income individuals and families it assisted. From July, 2007 through June, 2008, HOW provided services and housing to 425 households, or, 885 individuals and 380 children. Providing these services will not be possible if the governor's budget cuts are not reversed.

“I would hate to think of where I would be without HOW,” Robinson said. “I am grateful to have HOW in my life.”

For more information about how these cuts will affect HOW and the homeless women it serves, please contact Britt Shawver.

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