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Governor Christie Announces Expansion Of Successful Homelessness Reduction Program

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Supportive Housing Units Added in Hudson, Middlesex Counties

Trenton, NJ – Continuing his strong record of reducing homelessness in New Jersey, Governor Christie today visited Family Connections in Paterson for a roundtable discussion and to announce the Department of Children and Families' (DCF) expansion of its permanent supportive housing program for families by adding 25 units in both Hudson and Middlesex counties.

Keeping Families Together (KFT) is a model of permanent supportive housing designed specifically for child welfare-involved families struggling with homelessness and other challenges. KFT provides families access to supportive services, including case planning and evidence-based and trauma-informed coordinated services to support each family's unique needs. DCF established the first KFT program for 10 families in Essex County in July 2014.

"My administration has made eliminating homelessness for New Jersey citizens a key priority through a variety of programs, including Keeping Families Together, which provides families with the support services they need to get them back on track and stand on their own," said Governor Christie. "Our homelessness efforts are an investment in the future, giving parents the opportunity and stability in their lives to reconnect with their children or to literally keep their families together."

With the latest expansion of the Hudson County program and the addition of a new KFT program in Middlesex County through Catholic Charities, the number of New Jersey families benefitting from Keeping Families Together will now increase to 173 across nine counties: Essex, Passaic, Hudson, Monmouth, Atlantic, Gloucester, Camden, Cumberland, and Middlesex.

The additional 25 families who will be served by the Hudson KFT program will begin moving in this fall. These families will have access to housing and high quality services to help them reach their goals and brighter futures for their children.

"Twenty-five fortunate families in Hudson County, and another 25 in Middlesex County, will soon take an important step toward breaking the cycle of homelessness," said DCF Commissioner Allison Blake. "Instead of despair and hopelessness, these families will now have a foundation upon which to build better futures for their children, and change for the better the lives of generations to come."

DCF is partnering with the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) on this state-wide effort to support New Jersey's most vulnerable families. DCA committed 150 project-based housing choice vouchers to the program. Twenty-five will be allocated to the Hudson effort and another 25 for Middlesex. The vouchers are essential to helping these families find an affordable and safe place to live.

The initial Keeping Families Together pilot showed promise improving child well-being and decreasing child welfare involvement in New York City, according to Metis Associates.

To coordinate the state's efforts in combating homelessness, Governor Christie formed the Governor's Working Group on Homelessness in April 2015. The Working Group is comprised of two public members and representation from the Departments of Human Services, Health, Children and Families, Community Affairs, Labor and Workforce

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Development, Military and Veterans Affairs, Corrections, The State Parole Board and the Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency.

Highlights of the Administration's work to address homelessness include:

- Created the Interagency Council on Homelessness, which provided recommendations to improve programs and policies on homelessness and homelessness prevention, including the formation of a Working Group to examine housing first policies, rapid re-housing, and improved coordination among state agencies and social service providers;
- Expanded the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs successful Veterans Haven program to provide access to veterans in the northern part of the state in addition to the southern part of the state, doubling the capacity;
- Awarded 149 Shelter Support grants totaling \$18.2 million in both state and federal funding to nonprofit and local government agencies operating emergency homeless shelters and transitional housing facilities in New Jersey;
- Provided \$4.4 million for the Homelessness Prevention Program for financial assistance to low-and moderate-income tenants and homeowners in imminent danger of eviction or foreclosure due to temporary financial problems beyond their control;
- Under the statewide Housing First program, 425 rental vouchers will be allocated to chronically homeless households and 25 rental vouchers to homeless veterans;
- DCA anticipates \$5.4 million in annualized funding for the vouchers and \$250,000 in discretionary Community Services Block Grant funds for coordinated services.

In the current fiscal year budget, Governor Christie included \$43.8 million to fund programs that prevent homelessness and support homeless shelters, transitional housing facilities and rental assistance. Over the past five years, New Jersey homelessness has decreased nearly 29 percent and family homelessness has dropped by 49 percent. In 2016, the homelessness rate among families with children declined by 10.9 percent.

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