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CONGRESS HOLDS HEARING ON YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

The National Partnership to End Youth Homelessness and Singer/Songwriter Jewel Ask for Increased Federal Funding for over 1 Million Homeless Youth in U.S.

Washington, DC – On Tuesday, June 19th, The National Partnership to End Youth Homelessness, together with three-time Grammy-nominee Jewel, will petition for increased funding for homeless youth at a hearing to designate November “National Homeless Youth Awareness Month.”

According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, a member of the National Partnership to End Youth Homelessness, more than 1 million youth are currently living without homes.

During her testimony before the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support, Jewel will recount her own experience as a homeless teen and speak to the growing problem of youth homelessness in America.

“Approximately 5 to 8 percent of our nation’s youth experience homelessness each year,” said Nan Roman, President of the National Alliance to End Homelessness. “Homeless youth often flee homes where they experience abuse, neglect, rejection, or chaotic environments. Some youth become homeless after leaving foster care or juvenile delinquency group homes.”

“In order to avoid exploitation on the street, youth who become homeless need shelter and counseling to meet their immediate needs. They then need help reunifying with their families, and if that is not possible, access to a stable, permanent place to live with support services.” Roman said. “Hopefully, the combination of National Homeless Youth Awareness Month and increased federal funding will help us end the tragedy of youth homelessness.”

Currently, there is not enough shelter or permanent housing to meet the need. Youth are frequently turned away from the very shelters upon which they depend, due to a lack of bed space. According to the Congressional Research Service’s 2006 report, the federally funded nonprofit agencies that provide family reunification counseling, emergency shelter and transitional housing are only able to serve a fraction of the more than one million youth who run away or are homeless each year.

The National Partnership to End Youth Homelessness, a coalition of national advocacy organizations, has cited the need for an increase of \$37 million for the national Runaway and Homeless Youth program to expand family reunification services and housing, along with basic supportive services to intervene and assist homeless youth.

In addition, increased federal funding is needed for the Chaffee Independence Program in order to increase access to affordable housing and reduce the number of youth who become homeless after emancipation from foster care systems. These youth comprise a large part of the homeless population due to a lack of family ties and support.

“Contrary to stereotypes, these are creative and resilient young people,” Roman said. “With the proper funding and support, they can successfully reunify with family members or achieve opportunities to reach their potential through stable housing and life skills training.”

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The National Alliance to End Homelessness is a nonpartisan, mission-driven organization committed to preventing and ending homelessness in the United States. The Alliance analyzes policy and develops pragmatic, cost-effective policy solutions. Working collaboratively with the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to build state and local capacity, the Alliance provides data and research that lead to stronger programs and policies that help communities achieve their goal of ending homelessness.

For more information on The National Alliance to End Homelessness, visit: www.endhomelessness.org