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NEW REPORT: CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM MUST ADDRESS THE NEED FOR SAFE, AFFORDABLE, AND SUPPORTIVE HOUSING FOR THE FORMERLY INCARCERATED

Justice-involved Men and Women Face Significant Public and Private Barriers in Access to Housing—a Critical Component of Reentry

(NEW YORK, NY -- October 10, 2017) – Formerly incarcerated men and women face significant barriers to finding safe, affordable, and supportive housing—a critical component of the reentry process—according to A Place to Call Home: A Vision for Safe, Supportive and Affordable Housing for People with Justice System Involvement (APTCH), a report released today by the Prisoner Reentry Institute at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, The Fortune Society, The Supportive Housing Network of New York, and the Corporation for Supportive Housing.

APTCH posits that improving access to housing for vulnerable populations can reap increases in public safety and save taxpayer dollars, while acting as a base of stability from which jobs, education, vocational training, mental and physical health services, and community supervision can follow.

Since the 1980s, America has seen an explosion in the use of its criminal justice system, stemming from “tough on crime” policies, the war on drugs, and the rise in mass incarceration. Justice-involved people face barriers at every turn as they try to reconstruct their lives—including significant barriers when trying to access housing, including background checks, credit checks, and hefty deposits. Policies of local and federal housing authorities often pose barriers for those who seek subsidized or affordable housing. Faced with these barriers, people with criminal justice histories instead often end up on the streets, in shelters, and in unregulated, uninhabitable housing.

APTCH argues that supporting and investing in housing for individuals with criminal records aligns with shared American values of redemption and access to opportunity. Increasing access to housing reduces taxpayer costs for shelters and other emergency systems. It also increases public safety by helping to break the cycle of recidivism and creating a base for family stability and reentry success.

Among the report’s policy and practice recommendations are:

- Promoting “ban the box” initiatives;
- Eliminating discrimination by landlords;
- Reforming policies that exclude current tenants after an arrest or conviction;
- Developing creative partnerships and set-asides to include the justice-involved in housing programs;
- Creating a spectrum of types of housing to meet the diverse needs of this population; and
- Increased in-reach into correctional facilities to identify and assess people before they are released.

Ann Jacobs, Director of the Prisoner Reentry Institute at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, said, “A tremendous opportunity exists if we recognize the centrality of housing to success—not just increasing public safety and preventing recidivism, but improving employment outcomes, health, mental health, and the ability to contribute to family and community well-being.”
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JoAnne Page, President and CEO of The Fortune Society, said, “Immediate access to housing upon release is one of the most critical, if not the most critical, factor in someone’s success in the reentry process. The large majority of housing policies, regulations, and programs existing today quite literally close the door to formerly incarcerated people at every turn. We must continue to work towards a continuum of shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing options to address the unique needs and challenges faced by this growing, vulnerable population.

Laura Mascuch, Executive Director of The Supportive Housing Network of New York, said, “Providing justice-involved individuals with safe affordable and supportive housing benefits everyone: the formerly incarcerated, their families and their communities.”

Kristin Miller, Director of the New York/Metro Team for CSH (Corporation for Supportive Housing), said, “This is a report we will not let sit on a shelf, collecting dust. Every partner involved is committed to working with the City and State to stop the revolving door of people leaving incarceration, entering homelessness and then returning to jail or prison only to end up living on the streets again. The frequent use of criminal justice and social services resources by people caught in this cycle is straining budgets to breaking points and we know housing, especially supportive housing, can transform what is now a never-ending tragedy into real success for people re-entering our communities.”

People with criminal justice histories need a place to live, whether they are being released from prison or jail, under community supervision, or simply have criminal records to disclose to potential landlords. To fully reap the broader benefits to society and the government that flow from improving access to housing, policy makers, advocates, intuitions, and leaders must explore models and policies that end discrimination and promote values of redemption and access to opportunity.

The report, A Place to Call Home: A Vision for Safe, Supportive and Affordable Housing for People with Justice System Involvement, can be found here: http://johnjaypri.org/place-call-home/

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About The Prisoner Reentry Institute

The Prisoner Reentry Institute (PRI) at John Jay College of Criminal Justice focuses on learning what it takes for people to live successfully in their communities after contact with the criminal justice system, and on increasing the effectiveness of the professionals and systems working with them. This goal is pursued through several initiatives, including programs that increase access to higher education in jail and prison and post-release, student fellowships combining academic learning and reentry field placements, administration of the NYC Justice Corps programs, and policy initiatives focusing especially on housing for people with criminal records. Visit us at www.johnjayPRI.org.

About The Fortune Society

The Fortune Society’s mission is to support successful reentry from incarceration and promote alternatives to incarceration, thus strengthening the fabric of our communities. Founded in 1967, Fortune’s vision is to foster a world where all who are incarcerated or formerly incarcerated can thrive as positive, contributing members of society. To address the complex needs of our clients, Fortune employs a holistic model of innovative services and advocacy, offering comprehensive services to nearly 7,000 justice-involved people each year via three primary New York City locations: our service center in
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Long Island City, our housing model the Fortune Academy ("the Castle"), and Castle Gardens. Learn more about our work at www.fortunesociety.org.

About the Supportive Housing Network of New York
The Supportive Housing Network of New York is a membership organization representing 200 nonprofit organizations that have collectively created more than 50,000 units of supportive housing across New York State. Our membership also includes more than 150 affiliate agency and corporate members. The Network is the largest member organization of its kind in the U.S., and the leading national voice for supportive housing. Founded in 1988, the Network's mission is to increase the public's understanding of supportive housing; share best practices that continually improve supportive housing's effectiveness; and, most importantly, encourage the creation of enough supportive housing to end homelessness among the most vulnerable New Yorkers. The Network works toward these goals through advocacy, training, technical assistance, public education, research, and policy analysis. For more information about supportive housing and the Network visit us at www.shnny.org.

About the Corporation for Supportive Housing
Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) has been the leader in supportive housing for 25 years, demonstrating its potential to improve the lives of very vulnerable individuals and families. CSH has earned a reputation as a highly effective, financially stable organization, with strong partnerships across government, community organizations, foundations, and financial institutions. CSH is advancing innovative solutions that use housing as a platform for services to improve lives, maximize public resources, and build healthy communities. We are working to assure that housing solutions are accessible to more people in more places. Visit us at www.csh.org.