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New York State Division of the Budget Public Hearing Regarding State FY 2008-2009 Budget

Testimony of the Revered Maria A. Scates, Executive Director, JCTOD Outreach, Inc. Increase Funding For Supportive Housing Programs November 27, 2007

Hello. My name is Rev. Maria A. Scates and I am the Executive Director/Founder of JCTOD Outreach, Inc.– a provider of services for homeless people here in Utica and the Co-Chair of the Mohawk Valley Housing and Homeless Assistance Coalition. I welcome you all to our city and thank you for the opportunity to talk to you about next year's state budget.

I would like to urge you to increase funding for supportive housing programs that will help the homeless in the State of New York. There has to be a way for the state to do more to help the thousands of people who cycle through shelters and other emergency facilities every year, at great expense to taxpayers.

What I have in my hand is documentation that verifies; "I was homeless, I was left stranded, lived in abandoned buildings and needed help and support to get back on my feet." I am living proof that supportive housing works. I am now giving back to my community with my life as a full-time volunteer (that means I receive no salary none what so ever) to help the poor and needy especially homeless women, children and families with special needs get back on the right tract, to secure safe and supportive housing, be stabilized in their treatment program and secure employment. We help people who were once community liabilities to become community assets and I could name many more success stories like mine.

There are a few specific programs that I would like to mention – I hope you will run right back to Albany and make sure these are all fully funded in next year's budget.

- **Increase the Homeless Housing and Assistance Program capital allocation from \$30 million to \$60 million**

I'm very happy to report that JCTOD was just awarded a grant through this program, which we will use to create 8 units of supportive housing for chronic homeless women. But we competed against \$80 million worth of applications for only \$30 million worth of funding. There is a huge need for this program around the state. I urge you to include this increase in the Executive Budget.

- **Increase funding for Supported Housing for Families and Young Adults (SHFYA) by \$1.5 million.**

As you know, homelessness among families has grown all around the state. JCTOD receives funds to provide services to homeless families through the SHFYA program. For \$275 per unit per month, we and other groups around the state are able to keep formerly homeless families on track with their recovery – we prevent them from ending up back on the streets. I think we can all agree that children living on the streets are a human tragedy that our society should not tolerate. But since you are the people who make decisions about the state budget, I will add that homelessness also costs the state millions of dollars each year in emergency shelter services, emergency health services, foster care, and mental health. Let's stop spending so much money fixing problems when we can be proactive and spend less money up front to help people have stable lives.

- **Increase SRO Support Services from \$19.8 million to \$22 million**

SRO Support Services provides funding to operators of supportive housing for individuals. It is one of the only funding sources that allows groups like ours to provide social services to individuals who have lived on the streets. Groups around the state have had great success in helping people maintain stability once they get into supportive housing. So it is critical that this funding stream grow each year as new units are produced.

Thank you for coming to Utica tonight to hear our concerns about the state budget. I hope that my concerns and those of other advocates will be heard and reflected in the Executive Budget in January. Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Maria A. Scates

Executive Director/Founder