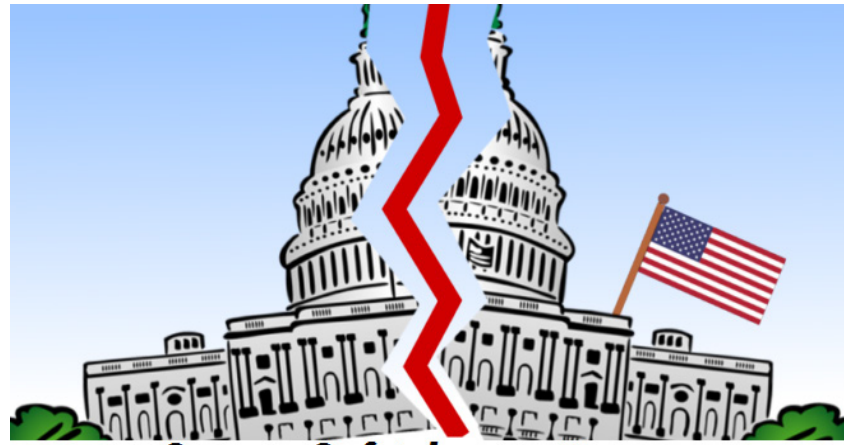




Government Shutdown ... It Can Happen Again

Our country's longest running government shutdown in history is finally over, but it could happen again. The "compromise" that ended the calamitous shutdown of a portion of the federal government only extended federal funding for the programs effected for three weeks through February 15th, so that only one week of that extension is left. While the negative political fallout from the recent partial shutdown would argue against any repeat performance, last Saturday was Ground Hog's Day, and recent history has an unfortunate record of repeat dysfunctional government outcomes.



Source: Safetylawmatters.com

It wasn't just a crisis for the 800,000 federal workers directly affected. Some people – for example those who take planes regularly – learned quickly just how much they count on the services that were involved. For us at CFH, and our clients, the shutdown meant a suspension of work on HUD rental assistance contracts and a real threat of eliminating SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps) payments for millions of households in desperate need.

Some of the damage from the shutdown can be fixed, but many of the terrible impacts will linger. For example, the financial loss to government contractors shut out of work, or businesses and communities dependent upon federal workers who lost paychecks, won't have loss made up. The devastating impact on HUD rental assistance programs will linger for some time as beleaguered and often short-handed federal workers returning to their work attempt to catch up on the back log, even as they have the prospect of another shutdown.

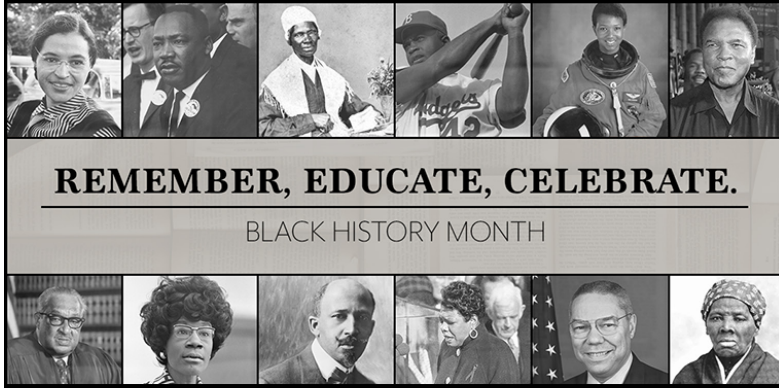
It doesn't take a public administration expert to acknowledge that programs to address long-term social ills, like the unavailability of healthcare access, homelessness or food insecurity, can't operate effectively on three-week fits and starts. Erratic funding puts these programs, and their recipients, on a constant emergency basis. What we must do, and what our laws call for, is an annual full-year budget.

Last week a Congressional Budget Office report estimated the 5-week-shutdown cost our economy \$11 billion. Keep in mind, this was all over a \$5.7 billion request for a wall to address an emergency that most people think was made up to start with. And that doesn't begin to consider the anxiety and long-term impact on the millions who suffered through this.

Congress and the President simply must pass a full year spending plan, and then address a full-year fiscal 2020 budget that should pass on time before the October 1st start of the new federal fiscal year. Both the current funding and the coming budget should fully meet the needs of our neighbors in need, considering the human right in the richest nation in the history of the world to healthcare, decent housing and food security. And it isn't too early for people who care to let our leaders know that.

Please join CFH today in calling your member of the U.S. House of Representatives and members of the U.S. Senate and telling them to fully fund programs to deliver access to healthcare, housing and food security for vulnerable people, and to make sure that funding is on time. You can find your Congressional representatives [here](#) or by calling the Congressional switchboard at (202) 224-3121.

Thinking About Racism During Black History Month



Source: *NYSenate.Gov*

Homelessness effects every community and every racial demographic across America. But the scourge of homelessness and unstable housing is hardly an “equal opportunity” tragedy. In the United States, historically and still today, racism and homelessness are intertwined. Some of the impact that results in people of color being far more likely to experience homelessness is caused by historic and ongoing discrimination in housing, employment, the criminal justice system and the health care system.

People of color on average operate on less of a safety net than others because historically discrimination has resulted in a diminished set of assets than other communities. This often means that people of color on the verge of homelessness have less support because their families and friends may be less able to assist them. Racism may not be the direct cause of a person experiencing homelessness, but like most social ills, it always exacerbates the problem.

African Americans make up about 12% of the U.S. population, but some studies have estimated that they represent between 40% and 45% of people experiencing homelessness across America. An Institute for Children, Poverty and Homelessness study reported they were 7 times more likely to experience homelessness than white Americans. In New York City about 58% of people experiencing homelessness are Black, and 31% are Hispanic, and only about 7% are white non-Hispanics, according to the Coalition for the Homeless.

It’s especially appropriate to think about the impact racism has on homelessness and other social problems during February, Black History Month. Jeff Olivet of the Center for Social Innovation, an expert who has studied the issue and has helped with training at Care for the Homeless, says “the high rates of homelessness among people of color are no accidents. They are the direct result of policy decisions we have made over the years.”

Care for the Homeless has an ongoing effort to address racism, which has included training, policy briefings and discussions and presentations about the issue. In February, CFH is holding a Black History Month event for invited staff, Board members and client leaders featuring former U.S. Ambassador Harry K. Thomas who also served as a Special Assistant to the Secretary of State and as Director General of the U.S. Foreign Service. Renewing CFH’s commitment to work toward undoing racism, we were recently chosen for a newly empaneled National Health Care for the Homeless Council “learning collaborative” on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, limited to just 10 health care providers nationally.

Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness

Care for the Homeless, our client leaders and our partners have been advocating for the Home Stability Support (HSS) legislation to raise the housing subsidy available to New Yorkers receiving public assistance up to 85% of the average fair market rent established by the federal Department of Urban Development (HUD) for a community based on family size. HSS is a statewide rent supplement for families and individuals who are eligible for public assistance benefits and who are facing eviction, homelessness, or loss of housing due to domestic violence or hazardous living conditions.

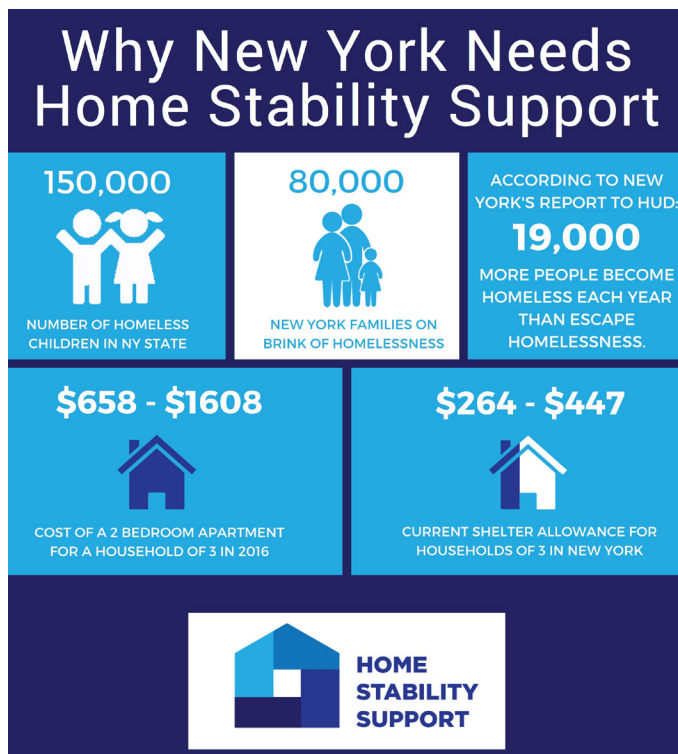
There are currently 171,000 households in New York receiving the public assistance “shelter allowance”, but the allowance has not kept up with rising rents. Prior to 1975, the rents of households on public assistance were eligible for the full payment of rent. However, over the past 40 years the failure to regularly increase the benefit to keep up with the rising costs of rent has made it less and less valuable. For example, the household

Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness cont'd ...

allowance for a family of three in the state currently ranges from \$264 a month to \$447 a month, based on location and other considerations. The actual average market cost for a 2-bedroom apartment in New York State, according to HUD, should be between \$760 and \$1,907. This is a huge difference that puts many people at risk of homelessness.

The cost of the updated home stability support allowance is estimated at \$450 million in state funding. In New York City, it is estimated that the new home stability support allowance would cost about \$11,224 on average for a family of three, while city shelter cost for the same family is on average \$38,460. That is a savings of \$27,236 per household per year! More importantly, keeping very low-income families or those in deep poverty in their apartments and avoiding homelessness would save the state millions of dollars.

The bill is sponsored by Andrew Hevesi in the Assembly, the Chair of the Social Services Committee, and Senator Liz Krueger in the Senate, the Chair of the Finance Committee. The Assembly bill (A1620) has over 110 co-sponsors and the Senate (S2375) has 9 co-sponsors so far with more to come. With the support of our allies in the Assembly at the Senate we have the utmost confidence that this legislation will pass this Session, creating a big win for homeless advocates and those most affected by housing instability. Assembly member Hevesi is also still pushing to include this in the FY20 Budget. If you are committed to fighting homelessness, you can help too! Please call your State Assembly Member and your State Senator [here](#). You can also tell Governor Cuomo that you support the legislation at 518-474-8390.



Source: Hungeractionnys.org

The Busy Advocate's February Calendar

February is Black History Month.

Wed., Feb. 13, 1:30 p.m., NYC City Council Meeting, City Hall Council Chambers, New York, NY, 10007.

Wed., Feb. 27, 12:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m., CFH Consumer Advisory Board Meeting, 30 E. 33rd Street, 5th floor conference room, Manhattan, NY, 10016.

Thur., Feb. 28, 1:30 p.m., NYC City Council Meeting, City Hall Council Chambers, New York, NY, 10007.

Mon., Mar. 4, Advocacy Day for New York's Community Health Centers and Their Patients, Advocates will head to Albany to advocate for issues involving homelessness and healthcare.

Become an advocate today! Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter for up-to-the-minute-info

