



**Testimony on the Proposed New York State Executive Budget FY 2011
Submitted by New Destiny Housing Corporation
2/10/10**

I am Carol Corden, the Executive Director of New Destiny Housing Corporation, a 15-year old New York City not-for-profit that provides service-enriched housing for low-income domestic violence survivors who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and I am pleased to have an opportunity to submit this written testimony opposing the elimination of the Supportive Housing for Families and Young Adults program (SHFYA) from the proposed FY 2011 New York State Executive Budget.

Most of the people we serve are women with one or more young children. Our tenants and clients are families where both the domestic violence victim and her children are suffering from the twin traumas of abuse and homelessness—traumas which frequently extend beyond a short stay in shelter. The affordable permanent housing New Destiny has developed is enriched with on-site services and linkages to off-site services and programs to address the challenges domestic violence survivors and their children face as they continue to heal and transition from homelessness to stability and economic independence.

Although New York State recognizes low-income domestic violence survivors as a priority special needs population at risk of homelessness, it does not provide any dedicated social service funding for this group. In fact, **the Supportive Housing For Families and Young Adults program (SHFYA) is the only public funding available to support service-enriched permanent housing for domestic violence survivors.**

This cost-effective program has, for several years, provided critical funding for services for homeless families headed by domestic violence survivors. Eliminating this State funding stream will cripple existing residential programs that provide the support recently-homeless survivors need to heal from the trauma of domestic violence, nurture their families, and advance on the path to economic self-sufficiency.

The loss of SHFYA will also make it more difficult for developers seeking to house homeless domestic violence survivors to access New York State capital funds from programs, like the Homeless Housing Assistance Program, that require support services.

New Destiny's program model incorporates voluntary services for families including job readiness, safety planning, domestic violence counseling, financial literacy, and children's services. Residential services have proven effective in keeping families together and stable in permanent housing. They have also helped to integrate victims of abuse—who have been wrenched from their families and neighborhoods because of safety concerns—back into the community.

At Marcello Manor in the Bronx, New Destiny's largest residence of affordable housing with services, the Tenant Support Coordinator has worked with 18 tenants or about 50% of households to prevent eviction and 16 families to avert the loss of essential benefits during the past year. The Tenant Support Coordinator also assisted 5 tenants to secure employment, all of whom were domestic violence survivors-- totally 25% of domestic violence survivors in the building. Finally, 93% of the 20 domestic violence survivors received services to remain stable in housing while 25% received services to remain safe from batterers. In addition, 96% of families, over half of whom were headed by domestic violence survivors, participated in recreation programming. As a result, the Recreation Specialist noted a marked change in children's expressiveness and sociability, increased readings levels and improvement in school performance, as well as a burgeoning sense of community and a support network among tenants in the building.

Listen to what two of New Destiny's tenants have to say about the residential services SHFYA supports:

When you have people like Josephine and her colleagues not just providing you with housing, but additional assistance and aid, it does something for you as a person...it helps build your momentum. By building your personal momentum and feeling better about yourself, you can extend that same feeling to your career, your neighbors and your community.

New Destiny provided me with resources...there are other programs that assist you partially or half-heartedly...but sometimes you need other pieces to get where you need to go and overcome certain hurdles and obstacles.

Moreover, New Destiny's program costs a mere fraction of the cost to maintain a family in shelter and reduces other costs to the public sector—e.g., lost days of school for children due to frequent moves, visits to the emergency room due to stress-related illness, and police and criminal justice responses to domestic violence incidents. Not only does the SHFYA funding provided to New Destiny cost New York State less than \$2,000 a family, it also leverages \$.85 from private funders for every dollar of State funding.

Domestic violence is one of the major contributors to the surge in family homelessness we are seeing in New York City and New York State. It is unconscionable that New York State, a leader in the area of domestic violence, should abandon domestic violence survivors and their children at a time when the number of homeless families is increasing by cutting the *only* program that provides funding for the residential programs serving them. We urge you to maintain SHFYA and New York State's commitment to homeless families headed by domestic violence survivors.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony to the record.

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