SOUTH PARK INN, INC.

Programs for Homeless Men, Women and Children
Emergency Shelter • Transitional Living • Plimpton House

To: Senator Harp and Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee

Regarding: Preserving funding for Homeless Shelter Providers

From: Brian Baker, Assistant Director, South Park Inn shelter

Date: February 20, 2013

Madam Chair's and members of the Appropriations Committee it is an honor to speak to you and to be able to draw to your attention the tremendous burdens the non-profit shelter provider community continues to face. As the Assistant Director of the South Park Inn I have had the privilege to serve the homeless of our community for over 28 years and help house over 45,000 men, women and children in need of shelter and services. Even in these trying times the South Park Inn continues to provide opportunities to the guests we serve with the help of a dedicated staff and thousands of volunteers that provide meals, medical services, job readiness classes, resume writing, counseling, mentoring workshops, AA meetings run by former clients and an array of services that helps meet the needs of the 153 people we shelter nightly. We also have unfunded programs that reach out to the unsheltered and homeless veterans on the street. We provide a weekly drop-in-center for Hartford's homeless veterans where they can meet with a volunteer service officers and get help and services through the VA along with food and comfort items.

The demand for shelter has never been higher. Last year alone we turned away 3453 men, women and children. Many of our clients are staying in the shelter longer and have fewer resources. Many of our families have exhausted their state welfare benefits and have no income and will stay for over six months or more because they lack income and are not eligible for supportive housing, rapid rehousing or any rental assistance program. In fact 75% of all those that we serve are without income. It is a credit to our staff and the many other non-profit agencies we work with that 305 people actually found permanent housing last year and moved out of homelessness. Finding why someone is homeless and addressing those issues greatly reduces the chance they will become homeless again and when resolved will greatly increase their quality of life.

As an essential service to the greater community we would like to thank this Committee for your long standing commitment of avoiding balancing the Budget on the backs of the poor and the agencies that serve them. All told only 57% of our income is from governmental sources. The rest of the money the shelter raises through foundations, grants, the United Way and donations. Unfortunately donations have not kept up with expenses and the shelter continues to run a deficit. We are asking that you preserve the funding to the shelter and safety net services so that we can continue to address the needs of the community when they need us the most.

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