

November 27, 2007

To New York State Division of the Budget:

I am writing in behalf of Goodwill Industries of Greater New York and Northern New Jersey to ask that you ensure the ability of human services agencies to meet the needs of people affected by major disasters, whether natural or man-made. New Yorkers know how important the services provided by not-for-profit agencies were after 9/11, and we have seen in the Gulf Coast how devastating it can be if there are not adequate services. It is critical that when considering the impact on infrastructure and how to restore bridges and roads, we also consider the impact on people and how to rebuild lives. We encourage the State of New York to provide funding of \$500,000 annually over three years to the Human Services Council of New York City (HSC) to implement coordinated not-for-profit disaster preparedness in this high-risk region.

Collaboration among not-for-profit agencies and between those agencies and government is essential to providing high-quality comprehensive disaster-related services to New Yorkers. In recent years, increased focus and attention on the not-for-profit sector has forced greater levels of collaboration. Although great strides have been made, funding has not kept pace with the increased level of responsibility. With the necessary financial resources, the not-for-profit sector will be able to help New Yorkers when they need it most. Funds are also being sought from local government and philanthropic sources, but State support is essential.

In the weeks, months and years after the initial impact of a disaster, human services (including case management, mental health counseling, information and referral, financial assistance, and more) need to be linked together in an overall recovery effort, supported by critical systems such as assessment, technology, volunteers, and financial resources. A coordinated recovery effort on the part of the not-for-profit sector requires detailed, advanced, and coordinated planning, and it requires that the human services agencies have the capacity to respond. We know that not-for-profit agencies can and will respond to assist in a large-scale disaster in New York City. A multi-agency response will be much more effective if not-for-profit agencies both participate in coordinated planning and preparedness efforts and prepare their own agencies to cope with disaster.

Goodwill Industries has worked in partnership with the Human Services Council, government, and other not-for-profit human services agencies to implement mechanisms for collaborative planning. Agencies in New York are much better prepared to coordinate services for people impacted by disaster than we were two years ago. Nonetheless, much remains to be done. Comprehensive disaster planning cannot be implemented without the time and resources of dedicated staff, knowledgeable in the areas of emergency management and disaster planning and recovery. With sustained funding to HSC from New York State, not-for-profit agencies could ensure not only that they coordinate with each other, but also that their efforts are integrated into state and local government planning. It is critical that a public/not-for-profit partnership be sustained to help New Yorkers recover from major disaster.

We ask that you consider funding for HSC that will:

- Ensure that the not-for-profit human services sector is prepared to provide effective, efficient, and compassionate recovery services after disaster, through collaborative planning.
- Enhance the capacity of not-for-profit service providers to cope with, respond to, and recover from disaster, through expanding the participation of community-based organizations in collaborative disaster planning and in developing agency-based continuity plans.

We know that the sector will need to respond after the next major disaster in conjunction with New York State and local authorities. We must also ensure that the sector has the capacity to meet that need.

Thank you for your support.

William J. Forrester
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