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COUNTY OF ERIE

MARK C. POLONCARZ

COUNTY EXECUTIVE

May 9, 2014

Hon. Barbara Miller-Williams
Erie County Legislature
92 Franklin St. – 4th Floor
Buffalo, NY 14202

RE: Enhanced Shelter Rates for Three Transitional Housing Providers

Dear Legislator Miller-Williams,

On April 16, 2014, at a meeting you organized, representatives from the Departments of Social Services and Mental Health met with Legislators and representatives from three transitional housing providers, Paradise House, Canaan House and New Life Residential Center. At this meeting, we discussed the discontinuance of an Enhanced Shelter rate for the aforementioned facilities. Unfortunately, these shelters rely on those funds for general operating.

After consideration of the request, it was decided that Erie County would again delay discontinuance of the Enhanced Shelter rate to give these facilities additional time to pursue additional funding opportunities. The funding was restored to the full 2013 negotiated Enhanced Shelter rates for four months and for an amount larger than the standard rate for the subsequent six. This will allow the three organizations an opportunity to align their program practices with appropriate funding sources. This extension was given verbally to these facilities by the Department of Social Services, and will also be provided in writing. We are deeply committed to providing shelter to women who are homeless.

It was also requested that the Erie County Department of Mental Health work with these facilities on exploring other options related to certification and funding. On May 1, 2014, the Erie County Department of Mental Health convened a meeting with these providers. At that session, the Erie County Department of Mental Health explained the process for certification and requirements for potential funding from New York State. The providers agreed to provide the County with clearer descriptions of current services, defining current practice from both programmatic and fiscal perspectives.

This process will take several weeks. In the interim, the providers agreed to reconvene to have any questions answered. Once the provider information responses is collected and organized, the providers agreed to contact your staff to provide you with an update on the progress.

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We respectively suggest a better use of our, and the agencies', limited time would be to allow the process to proceed as we discussed at the April 16, 2014, meeting. We therefore, will not be attending the May 14, 2014, meeting you have scheduled. It is premature to discuss further until we know what additional funding streams these facilities may access. We hope to give these facilities every opportunity to succeed and do not want to interrupt the progress we have achieved over the last several weeks.

Sincerely,



Ellery Reaves, MPA
Commissioner
Department of Mental Health

Sincerely,



Carol Dankert-Maurer
Commissioner
Department of Social Services

cc: Mark C. Poloncarz, Erie County Executive
Betty Jean Grant, Erie County Legislator
Patrick Burke, Erie County Legislator
John Mills, Erie County Legislature Chair
Lynne Dixon, Health and Human Services Committee Chair
Scott Kroll, Clerk, Erie County Legislature