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On any given night in America, nearly 700,000 people are homeless. With high unemployment and the continuing economic crisis, more and more low-income people find themselves slipping closer and closer to homelessness.

This past winter, several faith communities throughout the greater New Haven area joined together and participated in the Abraham's Tent program, which provided overnight shelter inside churches and synagogues to 12 homeless men from the Columbus House Shelter. This was necessitated by cuts in funding for homeless services and overcrowding at the shelter due to increased demand for services.

As a concerned citizen, I urge you to work to help those in Connecticut who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, by providing shelter and by fostering their personal growth and independence. I believe homelessness is unacceptable and unnecessary and emergency shelter should be only a brief, last resort on the road to stable housing and income for all Connecticut citizens.

Immediate action is necessary to restore cuts in state funding for homelessness and housing services. Your help is needed to support and expand rental assistance programs and the creation of new, supportive housing. Supportive housing is a proven, cost effective solution to long-term homelessness that matches supportive services with affordable housing.

We must increase state funding to support homeless/housing services and other vital safety net programs. As part of a balanced approach to meeting the needs of state residents, we must evaluate and reduce tax expenditures, close corporate tax loopholes, cancel a reduction in the estate tax that would benefit very wealthy persons, evaluate the state's "hidden budget" of taxbreaks, and consider raising income taxes for high-income earners.

The Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness has identified Eight Ways To End Homelessness:

1. Permanent Supportive Housing
2. Rental Assistance
3. Security Deposit Guarantees
4. Eviction and Foreclosure Prevention
5. Rapid Re-housing
6. Training for Jobs that Pay
7. Education for Jobs that Pay
8. Work Supports (housing, child care, cash assistance)

Please support funding for any state programs that support these initiatives. We must remember not to leave our most vulnerable citizens behind. Now is the time to commit ourselves to ending homelessness.

Sincerely,