

**Testimony before the Joint Legislative Budget Committee  
2020-21 New York State Budget Housing Priorities and Funding**

**February 5, 2020**

Good afternoon Chairwoman Krueger, Chairwoman Weinstein, Chairman Kavanagh, Chairman Cymbrowitz, and members of this joint legislative budget committee. On behalf of Habitat for Humanity's 43 affiliates throughout the state of New York, thank you for the opportunity to participate in today's hearing regarding the 2020-21 New York State housing budget.

My name is Mary Robinson, and I'm the CEO of Habitat for Humanity of New York State, an organization that supports the efforts of the state's affiliates through training and grant administration. I am joined today by Matthew Dunbar and Katrell Lewis from Habitat for Humanity of New York City.

Habitat for Humanity affiliates work in urban and rural areas, upstate and downstate, building and rehabilitating homes for low income residents, ensuring homebuyers pay no more than 30% of their income for their homes. Homeownership is an oft-forgotten piece among solutions to the affordable housing problems our state faces.

My office administers a grant from the Affordable Housing Corporation for 13 NYS affiliates, from Buffalo south to Newburgh. I first want to thank our senators and assembly members for recognizing the importance of homeownership and continuing to fund this vital program. Since its establishment in 1985, AHC's budget has increased from \$25 million per year only to \$26 million per year. Funding levels and unit allocation amounts have not kept up with increased construction and rehabilitation costs over the last 35 years.

During the 2019 session, the Assembly passed A6277a/S1824b Bailey-Walker, a bill that would increase the per unit allocation for high cost areas. This bill would give NYS Homes and Community Renewal the ability to provide up to \$75,000 per unit, an increase from the current maximum of \$40,000, in capital funding to certain projects that meet a high standard of deep and long-lasting affordability. To ensure this bill does not have an unintended consequence of funding fewer units, we are requesting an overall budget increase for the Affordable Housing Corporation from \$26 million to \$44 million, which will support critical affordable housing projects and aid us in our goal to expand affordable homeownership options for New Yorkers across the state. I have included a memo in support of this legislation and budget increase, signed by myself and 18 Habitat for Humanity leaders from across the state.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today and for your consideration of Habitat for Humanity's positions.

