



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **PHOENIX CITY COUNCIL APPROVES MORE SHELTER BEDS ON THE HUMAN SERVICES CAMPUS; REJECTS LOW-BARRIER SHELTER AT ANDRE HOUSE**

PHOENIX, Ariz. (Feb. 4, 2021): At its meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 3, the Phoenix City Council voted to approve a zoning request change allowing additional shelter beds on the Human Services Campus (HSC) for individuals experiencing homelessness, but rejected a 100-bed low-barrier shelter at Andre House. Council members also discussed allocating additional funding to address homelessness and to move forward on the city's proposed Homeless Strategies Plan calling for regional distribution of homeless shelters and resources.

After hearing presentations and community input lasting more than four hours, the Council voted to allow an additional 275 beds at Central Arizona Shelter Services (CASS) and 200 emergency beds for use during extreme weather. The application originally filed in January 2019 asked for approval for the low-barrier shelter in a to-be-renovated building adjacent to Andre House, which was to be operated by Community Bridges, Inc.

"We are grateful for the support of Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego and the city council to be able to shelter more men and women experiencing homelessness, but the outcome is bittersweet," said HSC Executive Director Amy Schwabenlender. "Best practices show that having access to a bed is a critical first step to moving from street to home. Being able to provide these additional beds is vital, and we're concerned that by rejecting the Andre House shelter, those who are most vulnerable will be literally left out in the cold. We know there is a great need for smaller, specialized shelters for individuals with significant challenges and the importance of continuing those conversations."

Andre House Director Father Dan Ponisciak said that "profound disappointment doesn't even begin to sum up how I feel. Andre House will continue to lead with compassion in serving the most vulnerable in our community and look for strategies to end homelessness for those who are suffering the most in our city."

Lisa Glow, chief executive officer at CASS, said efforts would begin immediately to develop an accelerated strategy to adapt the current facility.

“We are prepared to act quickly to expand to 700 beds by summer at our adult shelter on the Campus, thereby getting more people off the streets in downtown Phoenix.” she said. “We are grateful to the City of Phoenix and the city council for their commitment to addressing homelessness, and we are in full agreement that more regional resources are needed to solve homelessness and the very complex challenges that lead to homelessness.”

“I am deeply grateful, and deeply saddened at the same time,” said Jessica Berg, Chief Program Officer at St. Vincent de Paul, whose dining room will be one of two on-campus locations for the weather relief shelter beds. “We can now bring hundreds more individuals inside which will save lives and help folks end their homelessness. But without an additional lower barrier shelter, the most vulnerable individuals will be left outside. And I fear the neighborhood public health and blight issues will not improve the way we all want them to. My heart hurts for those who will still be without a place to go, and for our neighbors.”

Schwabenlender praised the collaboration among partnering agencies, particularly “the extraordinary advice and counsel of attorney Paul Gilbert and Andy Jochums of the law firm of Beus Gilbert McGroder who provided *pro bono* leadership, legal counsel, friendship and a very personal emotional commitment to serving men and women in our community struggling to survive and to change their lives. There are no words strong enough to express our appreciation.”

HSC, a 501c3 nonprofit agency, owns and operates a 13-acre campus at 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Madison that is home to 16 nonprofit organizations providing services and resources to people experiencing homelessness.

For more information visit [www.hsc-az.org](http://www.hsc-az.org).

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**ABOUT THE HUMAN SERVICES CAMPUS:** Founded in 2005, the Human Services Campus is a collaborative force of partner organizations united on one campus to end homelessness. Located just west of downtown Phoenix, 16 independent agencies on the Campus see nearly 1,000 individuals every day, offering a holistic range of client services including: reunification with family and friends; mental, physical and dental health; shelter; employment; meals; legal services and housing. Having all of these resources in one location with intra-agency communications makes it more feasible to provide a customized engagement for each client to help end their homelessness. For more information, visit [www.hsc-az.org](http://www.hsc-az.org).

