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**FIRST LADY CHIRLANE MCCRAY ANNOUNCES NEW \$9.5 MILLION
INVESTMENT TO PREVENT AND ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS AMONG YOUNG
LGBTQ NEW YORKERS**

*The First Lady and NYC Council Speaker Corey Johnson announce first-ever youth shelter
for people ages 21-24*

*NYC Unity Project will also fund 24 hour youth drop-in services in every borough, invest in
unprecedented efforts to address family rejection of LGBTQ young people, expand HIV
preventive services, and engage in cutting-edge research to better understand and support
LGBTQ youth in foster care*

NEW YORK—First Lady Chirlane McCray announced a new \$9.5 million investment to prevent and address homelessness for LGBTQ youth across the City. This investment includes funding for the City’s first ever youth shelter for young people up to age 24 and an expansion of hours at the City’s youth drop-in centers, ensuring that every borough has a 24 hour center where young LGBTQ New Yorkers can go to feel safe and supported any time, day or night.

This new commitment through FY 2021 will also include an unprecedented investment in preventing homelessness and addressing root causes of mental and physical health disparities among LGBTQ youth through programs and services that intervene in family rejection, and facilitate and support family acceptance of young LGBTQ New Yorkers. This package of funding includes new training for clinical practitioners from ethnically and geographically diverse backgrounds, expanded peer supports for parents, and a citywide campaign for parents and family members of young LGBTQ New Yorkers. Today’s announcement is a part of the NYC Unity Project, a citywide effort to make New York City the most welcoming city in the nation for LGBTQ children.

“While many LGBTQ New Yorkers come from loving, supportive families, too many do not. Left without a family support system to rely on, these LGBTQ young people, particularly young people of color, experience extreme physical and mental health disparities, and higher rates of homelessness and unemployment,” said **NYC First Lady Chirlane McCray**, who leads the NYC Unity Project. “Our city’s LGBTQ young people deserve to live freely without

fear. I'm proud that NYC is leading the way toward that goal and investing in our young people's futures. Today's announcement is the next step in our deep commitment to support and empower LGBTQ young people across our City."

The City's funding of the new shelter follows the March passage of a NYC City Council measure for the provision of services for runaway and homeless youth up to age 24.

"The opening of the city's first shelter for runaway homeless youth ages 21-24 is a major step towards progress. It's no secret that many of these young people are from the LGBTQ community, and we are under a special obligation to help and protect them. I am so proud of this landmark legislation, and my colleagues in the Council for making this a priority. I thank First Lady Chirlane McCray and the de Blasio administration for their work and commitment towards this \$9.5 million package to help LGBTQ youth," said **Speaker Corey Johnson**.

In addition to the new shelter, the City will fund new and expanded efforts to prevent and address homelessness and housing for LGBTQ youth, including:

- Expansion of three youth drop-in center hours to 24/7 service which will serve an additional 400 young people annually at each center and ensuring 24 hour service in all five boroughs. (DYCD)
- Expansion of training for parents and caregivers to become peer-to-peer advocates on the importance of family acceptance with other families of LGBTQ youth. (ACS)
- First-of-its-kind clinical training program, specifically aimed at clinicians of color, from geographically diverse neighborhoods in New York, who will be certified and trained in family acceptance clinical work, in partnership with the Ackerman Institute's Gender and Family Project, a national leader on LGBTQ family acceptance work (ACS)
- Expansion of clinical training program, Project LIFT, which provides training to clinicians working with ACS-involved families to support them in supporting their LGBTQ family members, to serve 600 families annually in partnership with the LGBT Community Center of New York (ACS)
- Funds to create bilingual, Spanish-speaking family support services for families of LGBTQ Latinx youth, in partnership with CAMBA Project Accept LGBTQ Youth (ALY) (DOHMH)

Today's announcement also includes an additional investment in the health, safety and well-being of LGBTQ young people across the City, including:

- The first-ever confidential foster youth population study, which will include questions about sexual orientation, gender identify, and gender expression (ACS)
- A youth-led participatory action research project to identify youth-driven goals and priorities for LGBTQ family acceptance work (DOHMH)
- Two new PrEP for Adolescents clinical sites in Harlem and Central Brooklyn, where LGBTQ young people are more likely to seek services and HIV transmission rates are high (DOHMH)

“NYC Unity Project continues to ensure that our city is the most welcoming in the nation for LGBTQ youth,” said **Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Dr. Herminia Palacio**. “This multi-agency effort provides LGBTQ youth with the medical and social services they need to be safe and healthy, and gives families the resources they need to affirm their LGBTQ children. I applaud our First Lady for prioritizing services to improve the lives of young people living in New York City.”

“In the decades I’ve spent working with youth, I’ve seen over and over again their capacity to think creatively, solve problems and drive changes that improve the lives of others. But no youth can reach their potential if they’re struggling to find a home,” said **Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives Phil Thompson**. “Every youth deserves a home that welcomes them fully and gives them the support they need to succeed. The NYC Unity Project is improving the lives of youth and strengthening our city.”

“Under Mayor de Blasio’s leadership, the City has seen unprecedented growth in services for runaway, homeless and LGBTQ youth, including enhanced mental health services and funding for 500 additional youth beds. With this new addition, there will be a 24-hour drop-in center in all five boroughs along with a new homeless young adult residence for 21-to-24-year olds. This administration is taking great strides toward alleviating the effects of homelessness on young people. We look forward to working with the NYC Unity Project and continuing the City’s commitment to connect every young person with a safe space and resources they deserve to rebuild their lives,” said **DYCD Commissioner Bill Chong**.

“Under Mayor de Blasio’s leadership, New York City continues to lead the way in empowering families and communities to stand up for and support LGBTQ youth, and at ACS we are working hard to make the child welfare and youth justice systems more welcoming, respectful and responsive to their needs,” said **ACS Commissioner David A. Hansell**. “This critical investment will help New York City create its first-ever youth shelter, along with several other resources to help address homelessness and mental health in the LGBTQ community. Overall, this initiative means that New York City can continue to build on its work and commitment to support LGBTQ youth and families in our community and help make the road brighter for so many young people.”

“As we continue to work day in and day out to make New York City a fairer, more inclusive city, we are very focused on creating friendly spaces for members of the LGBTQ community, especially LGBTQ youth. HPD celebrates this historic investment and supports First Lady McCray in her mission to make New York City a place where every New Yorker feels safe and welcome,” said **NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) Commissioner Maria Torres-Springer**.

Today’s announcement comes on the heels of the First Lady’s launch of the citywide “We Are LGBTQ Youth” ad campaign earlier this month in an effort to increase the visibility of LGBTQ young people and connecting them to LGBTQ-affirming services available across the City. The ads—which are currently running on the City’s subways, buses, and digital platforms—feature 17 different young LGBTQ New Yorkers proudly expressing who they are

and encouraging all LGBTQ youth to learn more about the array of City programs and supports accessible through nyc.gov/unityproject.

The administration has previously enhanced services to address LGBTQ homelessness, including opening a 24-hour drop-in center in Queens specifically targeting LGBTQ youth, and the first-ever City-funded transitional independent living homes with specialized services for transgender youth.

While New York City's LGBTQ youth fare significantly better than their peers nationally, too many vulnerable young people lack services that meet their specific needs. Evidence demonstrates that NYC's LGBTQ youth are far more likely than their peers to experience an array of social, physical, and mental health disparities—from dating violence to bullying to homelessness to attempted suicide.

NYC Unity Project is the City's first coordinated, multi-agency effort to address the unique challenges and needs of LGBTQ youth. To strengthen and better coordinate services across the City and ensure no young person falls through the cracks, the NYC Unity Project works collectively across 16 city agencies to better reach LGBTQ youth where they live, where they learn, and in their communities.

“As the Trump administration continues to callously roll back our community's hard-fought wins at the federal level, the NYC Unity Project's work has become more critical than ever,” said **NYC Unity Project Director Ashe McGovern**. “Through this bold investment in cutting-edge programs to address the epidemics of LGBTQ youth homelessness, family rejection, and health inequity—we are stating unequivocally that, as a city, we are committed to advancing justice for LGBTQ communities, particularly for our most vulnerable LGBTQ young people.”

NYC Unity Project includes participation from the Administration for Children's Services, NYC Children's Cabinet, Commission on Gender Equity, Commission on Human Rights, Department of Education, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Homeless Services, Department of Youth and Community Development, Human Resources Administration, Mayor's Center for Faith and Community Partnerships, Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City, Mayor's Community Affairs Unit, Mayor's Office of Operations, Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence, New York Police Department, and NYC Health + Hospitals.

“Today's unprecedented investment will go a long way in making sure LGBTQ youth across our city have access to the services and housing they need to feel safe, protected, and supported,” said **Chair and Commissioner of the NYC Commission on Human Rights, Carmelyn P. Malalis**. “I commend First Lady Chirlane McCray for continuing to commit much-needed and critical resources to support our LGBTQ youth and look forward to continuing our work with her and her team in bringing together diverse communities to support LGBTQ youth and their families.”

The City continues to lead the nation in protecting LGBTQ rights:

- In April 2018, the de Blasio administration announced it would become the largest city in the country to house incarcerated people according to their [gender identity](#), and not their sex assigned at birth.
- In June 2017, the de Blasio administration published New York City's first-ever [LGBTQ Health Care Bill of Rights](#).
- In June 2016, New York City became the first municipality to launch a citywide campaign specifically [affirming the right of transgender individuals](#) to use the bathroom consistent with their gender identity or expression.
- In March 2016, Mayor de Blasio issued an executive order requiring City agencies to ensure that employees and members of the public are given [equal access to City single-sex facilities](#) without being required to show identification, medical documentation or any other form of proof or verification of gender.
- In December 2015, the NYC Commission on Human Rights issued legal enforcement guidance defining specific gender identity protections under the City Human Rights Law, including equal bathroom access, as well as access to housing, employment, public accommodations, and other protections.

“Homelessness is a critical issue for LGBTQ youth who not only face high rates of homelessness but also see discrimination and stigma when they seek services. I applaud the city for tackling this issue in such a targeted way and look forward to working with them on these new programs,” said **Congressman Jerry Nadler**.

“As we work to make this city more fair for everyone, it’s clear that additional investments are needed in the health and well-being of a vulnerable, often marginalized population, our LGBTQ youth,” said **Council Member Debi Rose, Chair of the Committee on Youth Services**.

“Today, thanks to the longstanding advocacy of First Lady Chirlane McCray and Speaker Corey Johnson, we are making a significant investment that will pay dividends by preventing homelessness and by addressing mental health issues early on. As Chair of the Youth Services Committee, I am proud to stand with them as we further this city’s commitment to ensuring that no New Yorker is so marginalized that he or she falls through the cracks and becomes another homeless or mental health statistic.”

"This is a great day for LGBTQ rights in New York City," said **Council Finance Chair Daniel Dromm, who also chairs the Council's LGBTQ Caucus**. "Each day LGBTQ youth face homelessness as a result of rejection from their families. This multifaceted effort will help ensure that city agencies are equipped to meet the needs of these children and young adults. Perhaps most notably, these new intervention services empower agency staff to stop homelessness before it begins. I celebrate this progress and will continue to work alongside First Lady McCray and Speaker Johnson to make NYC a better place for our LGBTQ youth."

"We live in a time when our federal government openly attacks the rights, safety and well-being of LGBTQ young people, and the bigotry and family rejection it inspires drive too many of our LGBTQ young people to experience homelessness and despair," said **Matthew McMorrow, Senior Advisor for LGBTQ Community Affairs, Mayor's Community Affairs Unit**. "By contrast, the NYC Unity Project, under the leadership of NYC First Lady Chirlane McCray, is

affirming the dignity of our youth, celebrating their identities, and providing the resources and support LGBTQ youth need to live their truth with pride. Credit for today's announcement goes to Unity Project Director Ashe McGovern, the Unity Project Steering Committee, City agency staff, advocates and community partners who bring their personal experiences and professional talents to this vital work."

"The Center is thrilled to see First Lady McCray step up to dedicate significant funds and much-needed attention to the dire issue of LGBTQ youth homelessness," said **Glennnda Testone, Executive Director of NYC's LGBT Community Center**. "We see over 1,000 LGBTQ young people each year at The Center and we know first-hand what a powerful, positive difference appropriate resources make in changing a young person's life for the better."

"Hetrick-Martin Institute is deeply grateful to our First Lady, Chirlane McCray, for her unwavering leadership in addressing the challenges facing LGBTQ young people throughout NYC as well as working to ensure that all systems city-wide work vigilantly to create safer, more inclusive spaces and services. Our city's leadership sends a powerful message that ALL New Yorkers matter and deserve the same opportunities that historically, were not afforded them," said **Thomas Krever, Chief Executive Officer, Hetrick-Martin Institute**.

"The Ali Forney Center applauds the efforts of First Lady Chirlane McCray, Speaker Corey Johnson and the mayoral administration to respond to the crisis of LGBT youth homelessness in New York City, and to make our city safer and more responsive to all LGBTQ young people. We are especially gratified to see a commitment to fund youth shelters for young people up to age 24, as there is an overwhelming need for such shelters in the LGBT homeless youth population. We are also grateful to see that the city has determined to expand the number of 24/7 drop-in centers, as this is a service model that has worked well for the Ali Forney Center's clients," said **Carl Siciliano, Executive Director, Ali Forney Center**.

"The Ackerman Institute's Gender & Family Project is honored and excited to partner with Chirlane McCray's Unity Project to show that NYC uplifts its LGBTQ youth and values family acceptance as a major source of protection. Together, we are ready to expand NYC's capacity for family support and empowerment," said **Jean Malpas, Founder & Director, The Ackerman Institute's Gender & Family Project**.

"Congregation Beit Simchat Torah applauds the First Lady's new initiative as an important step in supporting New York City's LGBTQ youth, who are among our most vulnerable neighbors," said **Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum of Congregation Beit Simchat Torah**. "As LGBTQ Jews, we understand what it means to stand at the margins of society. We are shaped by a history that demands an empathic response to those in need; our sacred texts remind us that we know the soul of the stranger, having been strangers ourselves (Exodus 23:9). There are those within our community who know the challenges of homelessness, and each of us can recognize the power of having a place to call home. We hope these shelters and drop-in centers serve as a safe refuge for these brave and resilient youth, helping them create vibrant communities of choice, and raising them as our next generation of change makers."

“Union Theological Seminary applauds the City’s critical investment in homelessness prevention resources for our LGBTQ youth,” said **Rev. Fred Davie, Executive Vice President of Union Theological Seminary**. “LGBTQ youth have an ally in First Lady Chirlane McCray, and Union supports any and all efforts to ensure that LGBTQ youth have the resources they need to avoid homelessness and thrive in NYC.”

“St. James Presbyterian Church of Harlem is proud to be a part of this moment. We always hear that we must invest in the youth because they are our future. It seems as if our LGBTQ+ youth have been “divested” as our present and our future. This funding is not just supporting LGBTQ+ tolerance, acceptance or inclusion of our youth. It is an investment into the humanity of our youth that society has so tried to strip away,” said **Rev. Dr. Derrick McQueen, St. James Presbyterian Church of Harlem**.

“There is no better time for Orthodox LGBTQ youth to have the Unity Project’s services in this city. The need is real and the need is now. We have a religious obligation to protect our physical bodies but equally important is the obligation to care for and nurture our emotional well-being. Mental health issues abound, homelessness, both physical and spiritual, abound amongst Orthodox queer youth. Eshel’s work in New York City will be easier with the Unity Project on our side,” said **Miryam Kabakov, Executive Director of Eshel**.

“New York City is where young people from across the state and the country look to for hope and home,” said **Gabriel Blau, Executive Director of Equality NY**. “The Unity project is investing in those very youth, living up to the City’s reputation as a beacon of hope for LGBTQI people, and the birthplace of our movement. This is leadership, and it sends a message to all that the work to protect LGBTQI youth is ongoing and worthy of our resources. We are proud of our largest city, it’s leaders, and their commitment to our community.”

“The expansion of the Unity Project is a critical way for the City of New York to invest in our often-ignored LGBTQ youth,” said **David J. Johns, Executive Director of the National Black Justice Coalition**, a civil rights organization dedicated to the empowerment of Black lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and same gender loving (LGBTQ/SGL) people, including people living with HIV/AIDS. “The National Black Justice Coalition is eager to help change the narrative around LGBTQ/SGL youth and to support the work that is required to ensure that the intersectional needs of Black LGBTQ youth in particular, who experience health and housing disparities at disproportionate rates, are met.”

“In opening the City’s first-ever youth shelter, the NYC Unity Project is addressing an urgent need, particularly on the part of LGBTQ youth, who comprise a huge 40% of NYC’s homeless youth population,” said **Lisa, Koffler, MPH, Assistant Director of HIV Prevention, CAMBA, Inc.** “CAMBA commends the NYC Unity Project for its commitment to our most vulnerable youth and for recognizing the vital role that family acceptance plays in in the health and well-being of LGBTQ young people.”

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