



The United States Conference of Mayors

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SLOW ECONOMIC RECOVERY KEEPS PRESSURE ON U.S. CITIES' EMERGENCY FOOD AND SHELTER SERVICES

Mayors' Annual Report on Hunger and Homelessness Documents Growth in Demand, Shortfall in Services, Concern for Future

Washington, D.C. -- A survey report issued just days before the threatened sequestration of federal funding forecasts the need for more, not less, spending in the year ahead to support of growing numbers of hungry and homeless families and individuals in America's cities. The pending fiscal cliff and sequestration cuts to local social programs could stress already stretched programs designed to serve people in need as automatic cuts are expected if Congress and President fail to reach a budget deal prior to December 31.

The annual assessment of hunger and homelessness conducted by The U.S. Conference of Mayors found continuing growth in the demand for emergency food and housing in 25 cities whose mayors are members of the Conference's Task Force on Hunger and Homelessness. Not surprisingly, unemployment and poverty lead the list of causes of hunger cited by officials in the survey cities; lack of affordable housing, poverty, and unemployment are seen as the main causes of homelessness.

The report was released in a telephone press conference by members of the Conference of Mayors leadership group, who were joined by the Director for the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. "We expected that challenges related to the slow national economic recovery would be reflected in the data on hunger and homelessness coming in from the survey cities this year – and they were," said Asheville Mayor Terry Bellamy, who chairs the mayors' Task Force on Hunger and Homelessness. "Dealing with growing needs in the face of dwindling resources is nothing new for mayors, but we are especially concerned about what could happen to our emergency food and shelter programs next year, and in the years beyond, if Washington cannot find a responsible way around – not over – the fiscal cliff," she said.

All but four of the cities in this year's survey reported that requests for emergency food assistance increased over the past year, and three of these four said requests remained at the same level as the previous year. Emergency kitchens and food pantries in nearly all of the cities had to reduce the quantity of food a client could receive during a food pantry visit or in a meal at an emergency kitchen. In fact, lack of resources meant people had to be turned away in need in nearly 90 percent of the cities.

On the homeless front, 60 percent of the cities said they saw an increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness; across the cities, the increase averaged seven percent. Over 70 percent of the cities reported an increase in homelessness among families; 35 percent reported an increase among individuals. Because no beds were available for them, homeless families with children were turned away by emergency shelters in 64 percent of the survey cities; and shelters in 60 percent of the cities had to turn away unaccompanied individuals.

The Conference of Mayors President, Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter, cited the mayors' repeated appeals to Congress for a balanced approach to fiscal responsibility that will create options for people increasingly

reliant on emergency help. "In Philadelphia, I see people who are hungry and in need of shelter on a daily basis," he said, "and explaining to them that Congress is cutting funding for the help they need is not acceptable. What they need are jobs so they can support their families, and Congress can help to create those jobs if it passes a fair and balanced budget with investments in infrastructure, innovation, and real people."

Louisville, KY Mayor Greg Fischer, who chairs the USCM Committee on Metro Economies and participated in the press conference call said, "This report is an a stark reminder of the long-lasting impact the recession has had on many of our citizens. Families, who once lived in middle class homes, now find themselves without a roof over their heads, needing multiple social services for the first time in their lives. In Louisville, our compassionate community responds on several fronts including a network of one-stop service-providing sites called Neighborhood Places. Other initiatives address specific needs such as the Family Scholar House program, which provides shelter and support for homeless, single parents working to complete a college education. Each year, we have a concerted outreach to families and individuals in need – our Give A Day week of service which galvanized 90,000 volunteers and acts of caring this past April."

Survey city officials are pessimistic about the future: Three out of four expect requests for emergency food assistance to increase over the next year, and nearly half expect that resources to provide emergency assistance will decrease – some (22 percent) say substantially. The combination of increasing demand and decreasing resources was cited most frequently as the biggest challenge they will face in addressing hunger in the coming year.

Officials in 60 percent of the cities expect the number of homeless families to increase over the next year; those in 56 percent of the cities expect the number of homeless unaccompanied individuals to increase; and those in more than 58 percent expect that the resources needed to provide emergency shelter will decrease.

"For the past 30 years this report has called national attention to the challenges of hunger and homelessness in this country and has helped to direct resources where they are needed," the Conference's CEO and Executive Director, Tom Cochran, explained. "Looking back over the past year, these issues have been made worse by the slow recovery from our economic recession. Looking ahead, we see the challenges continuing, so the Conference of Mayors will continue to document the need for emergency services in cities across America, as a service to the nation's mayors and to the families and individuals in their communities who need our help."

A copy of the report, which also contains descriptions of dozens of programs that the survey cities have undertaken to combat hunger and homelessness, can be downloaded from The Conference of Mayor's web site at www.usmayors.org. An audio file of the press conference call will be available on this site on Friday, December 21.

The 25 participating cities whose mayors are members of The U.S. Conference of Mayors Task Force on Hunger and Homelessness are:

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| Asheville, NC | | Phoenix, AZ |
| Boston, MA | Des Moines, IA | Portland, OR |
| Charleston, SC | Gastonia, NC | Providence, RI |
| Charlotte, NC | Los Angeles, CA | San Antonio, TX |
| Chicago, IL | Louisville, KY | St. Paul, MN |
| Cleveland, OH | Minneapolis, MN | Salt Lake City, UT |
| Dallas, TX | Nashville, TN | San Francisco, CA |
| Denver, CO | Norfolk, VA | Trenton, NJ |
| | Philadelphia, PA | Washington, D.C. |

The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are 1,295 such cities in the country today, and each city is represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the mayor. Like us on Facebook at facebook.com/usmayors, or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/usmayors.