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FOR: CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO, PROJECT HOMELESS CONNECT

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California's Budget Problems Could Send Homeless Rates Soaring

Experts Say Cuts in Safety Net Programs Could Have Devastating Impact

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. – Proposals to balance California's ballooning budget deficit could lead to a dramatic rise in homelessness, according to experts.

Faced with a more than \$24 billion dollar budget deficit the state is facing the prospect of catastrophic cuts that could eliminate entire social welfare programs and make deep cuts in other safety-net programs, ones that serve the poorest and most vulnerable Californians.

“Support services to help the homeless are already under tremendous strain,” says Judith Klain, Executive Director of Project Homeless Connect™ (PHC). “The thought of more cuts in essential social welfare programs that could result in tens of thousands more people ending up on the streets or on the verge of homelessness is extremely worrying. Particularly if many of those are families with young children. There simply isn't the shelter capacity to cope with that kind of influx, nor the money to help provide alternative accommodations for them.”

Klain says that over the past year they have been seeing a steadily increasing rise in the number of homeless or near-homeless people coming to Project Homeless Connect events seeking help. It's a trend she doesn't expect to end any time soon. “The economy is in trouble, more and more people are losing their jobs, their homes, and their healthcare. Combine that with the fact that so many cities are having to cut back on their support services and it's no surprise that we see the end result on our streets, and in particular on the streets of San Francisco.”

Klain and her team are bracing for a larger than usual turnout for the next PHC event on Friday, June 5th at the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, 99 Grove Street in San Francisco, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. They are appealing to people to volunteer to help them meet that increased demand.



By creating a one-stop-shopping model, PHC makes it possible for people experiencing homelessness to access services like medical care, mental health and substance abuse treatment, benefits, legal support, dental care, shelter, eyeglasses, food, and more. At the most recent PHC event in April, the first one focusing just on families and children, on one single day more than 1,074 people – including 516 children - came to seek services provided by over 1,000 volunteers.

The event is the 27th Project Homeless Connect event. Since October 2004 more than 12,600 volunteers helped provide services to more than 27,000 homeless and poor San Franciscans. In that time almost 6,000 people were screened for benefits, more than 3,000 were given help finding a job, and almost 5,000 were provided medical care.

PHC has proven so effective that it is serving as the model for similar programs in more than 200 cities across the U.S. as well as in Australia and Canada.

For more information contact Kevin McCormack or go to www.projecthomelessconnect.com

About Project Homeless Connect

Project Homeless Connect makes a real difference in the lives of the City's homeless by bringing together almost 250 non-profit agencies, private businesses and volunteers to assist San Franciscans in need. Since the program's inception in October 2004 as a joint effort of San Francisco's health care, housing and human service systems, Project Homeless Connect has been supported by tens of thousands of volunteers, individuals and companies giving their time, cash, clothing, food and essential services. To date, this program has provided services to thousands of the City's most economically disadvantaged men, women and children with basic human needs and housing. Project Homeless Connect is a key component of Mayor Newsom's 10-year plan to abolish homelessness in San Francisco. This unprecedented approach to helping the homeless has been adopted as a national model in more than 200 jurisdictions in the U.S and has also been implemented in Canada and Australia.