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Good Day,

I am Richard I roxell, president and founder of House the Homeless, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization created in 1989 here in Austin It is the oldest grassroots, homeless advocacy, organization in Texas It is comprised of all homeless and formerly homeless people and those wishing to end homelessness Our goal is to end homelessness as it exists today through education and advocacy HTH is an all volunteer organization with no paid staff

We have created many programs that we have then passed on to other organizations

For example, we wrote the Migrant Families Report that identified the phenomenon of thousands of families changing residence and schools within the AISD system in an effort to avoid eviction borne of economic problems. As a result, "Project Help" was created and funded under the 1988 federal McKinney Act and is now part of the AISD system. This program helps homeless children that need school books, supplies, and life saving vaccinations

Similarly, House the Homeless created the Jobs Plus program that provides help to people experiencing homelessness to secure jobs and the transitional help needed to **leave** homelessness including assistance with the first and last months rent, and deposit money This program is now called Hands Up to Housing and operates at the ARCH

House the Homeless in 1989, wrote and presented the Austin Police Department with the program, Blue Gray Task Force This is the idea of bringing purpose to the lives of retired law enforcement officers and involving them in resolving unresolved murder cases known as "cold cases"

Another program, Project Fresh Start, identifies the needs of single homeless adult males who are dually diagnosed with both mental health and substance abuse problems

This proposal identifies the **needs** and what organization/group might **best serve those needs** It is a seamless Continuum of Care proposal that establishes all of the steps needed to move people from an **abjectly homeless state** to a fully housed, **stabilized** condition or to where they are **employed and self-sufficient** The project received the Community Collaboration Legacy Award from the Capital Area United Way and the Austin Chamber of Commerce It was the **only** homeless project ever funded by then governor George W Bush with \$100,000 for the jobs component in a 20 person model project

However, the realization that certain **external** factors negatively impact on the potential success of Project Fresh Start, led HTH to the creation of the Universal Living Wage

Last year, this community collectively brought in \$4,000,000 through the Austin Area Homeless Task Force to address the problems of homelessness but what we realized is that, all of this money, and all our efforts won t sustain people in housing when those found to be disabled receive only \$623 00 per month Working a 40 hour week job, at the current federal minimum wage of \$5 15 per hour, or even a wage of \$6 or \$7 per hour, is not enough to **keep** people in housing in Austin

To that end, HTH devised a single national formula that ensures that anyone working 40 hours in a week will be able to afford basic food, clothing, shelter, and have access to health care, wherever that work is done throughout the United States

Focusing on the support of businesses, unions, non-profits and faith based organizations, we now tout the support of 1,556 such entities representing over 1,000,000 registered voters We are proud to say that the City of Austin was the first municipality to endorse the Universal Living Wage

Promoting democratic participation, House the Homeless has registered over 2,000 homeless people to vote in a non-partisan fashion

HTH helped to create the Austin Homeless Advocate Newspaper This is Austin's homeless newspaper written and sold by our homeless citizens about their experiences while living on the streets of Austin

HTH also has also adopted two homeless orphaned girls in the county of Uganda, Bobirye and Rebecca This helps the guys think beyond their own suffering

You can see some of the other efforts of House the Homeless on our two websites

www HousetheHomeless org and www UniversalLivingWage org

7

Some Awards Received by HTH includes

COA Distinguished Service Award – Mayor Lee Cook Certificate of Recognition- Governor Ann Richards Certificate of Appreciation -- Mayor Bruce Todd COA Human Rights Commission COA Certificate of Appreciation – Mayor Gus Garcia

We are now in the process of publishing our book *Looking Up at the Bottom Line* that tells about some of our other efforts including fighting for six years the "No Camping" ordinance that only served to criminalize the condition of being homeless, waste both tax dollars and police resources while interfering with the dramatically more important task of ending homelessness, itself

Finally, it was in 1989 that we created Legal Aid for the Homeless where I act as the director and help the disabled homeless apply for disability benefits Again, \$623 00

per month is far less than the minimum wage For that reason, House the Homeless/Legal Aid for the Homeless are partnering with Alan Graham and Mobile Loaves and Fishes in an effort to **make the cost of the housing relate to the dollars available** through the Habitat on Wheels Project We do this with one additional caveat, which is to recognize that these folks are citizens of our community With all of their flaws and warts, they are us They are our brothers and sisters, and we must treat them with dignity and fairness, with compassion, and with love

5

As I leave the podium, I wish to personally thank Mayor Will Wynn Following our 14th Homeless memorial on November 18th, having read the names of 93 more people who died on our streets this past year, we launched our 7th Annual Thermal Underwear Drive in an effort to prevent further loss of life Thank you, Mr Mayor, for sending your check You may well save the life of one or more of our people this winter On Christmas Day, we provided over **750 people** with life saving hats, gloves, socks, thermals, and rain ponchos in an effort to minimize further deaths on our streets