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**NEW YORK STATE AGREES TO IMPROVE PROCESS FOR HELPING NEW YORK CITY
ADULT HOME RESIDENTS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS TRANSITION INTO THE COMMUNITY**

*Supplement Requires State of NY to Meet Specific Targets and Deadlines &
Creates Peer Bridger Program for Adult Home Residents with Mental Illness*

Brooklyn, NY, March 12, 2018 – Lawyers for thousands of residents of 23 large “adult homes”—board and care homes serving primarily people with mental illnesses—have filed a supplemental agreement to the 2013 landmark settlement, in which the Department of Justice, lawyers representing the class of adult home residents and the state reached an agreement that required the State of New York to provide as many scattered-site, supported housing units as necessary to afford all adult home residents with serious mental illnesses the opportunity to live in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs, and provide and maintain community services and support.

The Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, Disability Rights New York, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, Mobilization for Justice (formerly MFY Legal Services), the law firm of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton and Garrison, the U.S. Department of Justice, and the State of New York filed in federal court today a proposed settlement agreement that supplements an existing settlement agreement between the parties. The original settlement, entered in 2013, was intended to ensure that adult home residents with serious mental illness would have the opportunity to live in their own homes with the services they need to succeed and participate in their communities. The new supplemental agreement makes improvements to the process for engaging adult home residents, assessing their needs, and assisting them in transitioning to supported housing and other community housing. The new agreement was entered into to resolve concerns about delays, ineffective engagement, poor care management, and other breakdowns in the process of implementing the original settlement.

“Thousands of New Yorkers with mental illness have languished in deplorable institutional settings for decades. This settlement will finally give these individuals the chance to live independently in the community with dignity,” said DRNY Executive Director Timothy A. Clune.

"We are pleased that adult home residents will be able to move past the challenges that made it so hard for people to take advantage of this landmark agreement," said Jennifer Mathis, Director of Policy and Legal Advocacy, the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law. "The settlement will now ensure better accountability and offer people a real opportunity to live their own lives, with choice, autonomy and dignity."

Three key components of the settlement, include:

Specific goals and timeframes for ensuring that "in-reach" to adult home residents, assessment of their needs, care management, service planning, and transition to community housing occur in a timely and effective way.

A system of quality assurance and performance improvement that documents, analyzes and addresses systemic problems that occur in implementing the settlement agreement.

Measures to enhance the effectiveness of the agreement, such as the establishment of a "Peer Bridger Program"—where trained individuals who have had personal experience with the mental health service system will engage and provide support to adult home residents in making decisions about where to live and in exercising their rights under the settlement agreement.

"Moving to the community after years, sometimes decades in an institution is difficult and requires a lot of support," said Jota Borgmann of Mobilization for Justice. "We are glad the State of New York has committed greater resources to this process so that more adult home residents successfully make the transition."

Additional settlement enhancements that will be required of the state include "Quarterly Reviews" of randomly selected cases; the implementation of a "Case Review Committee," composed of representatives of the State, the United States, Class Counsel, and an Independent Reviewer, to address and resolve individual cases that require further attention; as well as "Post-Transition Incident Reports and Review" to ensure the health and safety requirements of the adult residents are being met.

"After many years of litigation, we're pleased to see a greater commitment of resources to support people with disabilities outside of institutions," said Roberta Mueller, Senior Supervising Counsel at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest. "We look forward to working with our partners to support adult home residents in their move to greater independence."

The U.S. District Court must approve the settlement.

Each of the following organizations is counsel to the class of adult home residents who have the opportunity to move to the community if they so choose:

Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law

Disability Rights New York

New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

Mobilization for Justice (formerly MFY Legal Services)

Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP (acting pro bono)

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The Judge David L. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law is a national legal-advocacy organization representing people with mental disabilities. It promotes laws and policies that enable people with psychiatric or intellectual disabilities to exercise their life choices and access the resources they need to participate fully in their communities.

Disability Rights New York is the designated independent non-profit Protection & Advocacy System empowered by Congress to investigate allegations of abuse and neglect and provide legal and non-legal advocacy services to people with disabilities in New York State. The Protection & Advocacy System was created by Congress as a direct result of the horrific conditions that were uncovered in the 1970's at New York's Willowbrook State School.

Mobilization for Justice, *formerly MFY Legal Services*, envisions a society in which no one is denied justice because he or she cannot afford an attorney. To make this vision a reality, MFJ provides free legal assistance to residents of New York City on a wide range of civil legal issues, prioritizing services to vulnerable and under-served populations, while simultaneously working to end the root causes of inequities through impact litigation, law reform and policy advocacy.

New York Lawyers in the Public Interest works to promote and protect the civil rights of people with disabilities, advocating for better programs and policies in public schools, less restrictive residential opportunities, and access to public services and all venues across New York City.