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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Homeless Legislation Introduced: More Resources, Flexibility, to Assist All Homeless Populations

The “Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act (HEARTH), H.R. 840, was introduced in Congress this afternoon by Representatives Julia Carson (D-7th/IN), Geoff Davis (R-4th/KY), Barbara Lee (D-9th/CA) and Rick Renzi (R-1st/AZ). In seeking to reauthorize and strengthen the HUD McKinney-Vento Homeless assistance programs, HEARTH respects greater decision making at the local level, more closely aligns the HUD definition of homelessness with other federal agencies, expands resources for emergency shelter and supportive services, provides a framework for greater homeless prevention activity, and allows communities the flexibility to implement a range of housing solutions.

“This legislation represents a valuable opportunity to assist all people who are homeless -- individuals and families, persons with disabilities, children and youth. The HEARTH Act would give communities - rural, urban and suburban alike - some of the necessary tools to respond to the crisis of homelessness, rather than force a one size fit all solution,” said Brad Paul, NPACH Executive Director.

In recent years, the “chronic” homelessness initiative and a number of HUD McKinney-Vento reauthorization proposals have aimed to transform the federal government’s homeless programs into a supportive housing-centered approach, resulting in fewer resources for supportive services, emergency shelter, and programs that serve homeless families, children and non-“chronic” populations. Under this policy direction the homeless assistance programs have received very modest increases to account for renewals of supportive housing projects, but other housing programs, including HOME, CDBG, and Section 8, have been cut by \$3.3 billion over the past two years.

The HEARTH Act provides a critical piece of a broader strategy necessary to address homelessness. HEARTH follows recent research, which indicates that homelessness is much more prevalent than previously acknowledged and that only a significant expansion of affordable housing and the provision of universal health care and livable incomes will move us toward the goal of ending homelessness. HEARTH also reflects principles for reauthorization of the HUD McKinney-Vento programs that have been endorsed by over 200 national, state, and local organizations <http://npach.org/mvrecommendations.pdf>