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MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT FOR

AN INCREASE IN THE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE GRANT

Interfaith Impact of New York State supports immediately raising the New York State basic public assistance grant, which has not been increased since 1990, and increasing the housing and heating allowances, which have not risen since 1987.

Inflation has taken its toll, and as representatives of faith communities from across New York State, we are deeply concerned about the devastating impact that inadequate State funding for the basic Public Assistance (welfare) grant is having on families in New York.

In language that resonates with a deep understanding of our shared religious values, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt said, "The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little."

Today, after set-asides for landlords and utilities, many families have little or no money left to meet expenses for clothing, food, school supplies and other necessities. We speak with a prophetic urgency and embrace the biblical mandates to support the widow and the stranger, feed the hungry and clothe the naked.

The best way to build and maintain healthy communities is to make sure that everyone has adequate food, clothing and shelter. When the State withholds these basic necessities from any member of our society, every New Yorker suffers.

We call on Governor Eliot Spitzer and the members of the New York State Legislature to increase the Basic Allowance of the Public Assistance grant by 49% to account for inflation since 1990 and to increase heat and energy allowances to account for inflationary increases since they were last adjusted.

We further call for a commission to investigate the adequacy of all public assistance allowances and to recommend mechanisms to provide for annual cost adjustments.

Interfaith IMPACT of New York State is a statewide organization of congregations and individuals from Protestant, Unitarian Universalist, Reform Jewish and other faith traditions. We advocate from progressive and liberal-religious points of view for compassion, reason and social justice in New York State public policies.

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