



Public Statement on Office of Homeless Services Funding for Gloria's Place

December 21, 2023

On November 27, 2023, HopePHL received news that the City of Philadelphia's Office of Homeless Services (OHS) planned to eliminate funding to HopePHL's emergency shelter effective January 1, 2024. Currently the emergency shelter, which started in a church basement and later became Gloria's Place (now located at 3902 Spring Garden Street) houses 6 adults and 43 children and has served as the bedrock of our mission, caring for an estimated 2,500 families since our preceding organization, People's Emergency Center, launched in 1972.

After a closure in 2021 at OHS's request, we reopened again in 2022, to help the city respond to emergency housing requests from larger families (adults with five or more children) experiencing homelessness, due to an increased demand and challenge identifying shelter space that could accommodate larger families. With larger dormitory style rooms, Gloria's Place was ideal for these residents to remain together while they work to identify permanent housing.

OHS instructed Gloria's Place leadership that current residents needed to find other housing accommodations by December 31, due to a lack of funding, with less than 40 days' notice. Since receiving news of the closure, staff have identified tentative accommodation for two families. For the remaining four families, our staff continues to help them seek alternative housing options. A limited housing inventory and holiday timing make this transition especially difficult.

The Philadelphia Inquirer published an article on December 20, titled "Philly's Office of Homeless Services overspent its budget by almost \$15 million and faces an investigation," in which Mary Horstmann, the city's Deputy Managing Director for Health and Human Services is attributed as stating that "current services should not be affected." Kathy Desmond, President of HopePHL wrote to our district councilperson's team that evening to alert her that services are being cut:

"...While a few families have been able to identify alternate housing since the beginning of December, we still have four families who have no place to go. We have been told the city can offer no additional support for these families and they will not pay us beyond December 31. I am not comfortable putting these families out in the winter, with nowhere else to go – especially during the holidays. It's my understanding that at least 1-2 other shelters are also being closed."

Residents face unprecedented challenges in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, and the loss of emergency shelters, public funding deficits, and a lack of affordable housing inventory add to our concern. According to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, accommodations for families experiencing homelessness in Philadelphia have steadily decreased from 8,850 beds in 2017 to 6,744 in 2023 (down 23%), reinforcing our uncertainty.

OHS funding was critical to the ongoing operations of Gloria's Place, but we remain optimistic and will embrace this opportunity to inspire our donors and partners and explore options to use this space to best serve our mission. We will keep you informed as our plans progress and look forward to continuing service for families and youth in need. All other housing options offered at HopePHL will remain uninterrupted.

If you are interested in supporting HopePHL's housing, or if you have questions regarding this statement, please contact Jacqui Flynn, VP of Resource & Business Development, jflynn@HopePHL.org