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***PRESS RELEASE***

**AARP Endorses Housing First! Plan**

*AARP Joins in Calling for New York City's Next Mayor to Develop and Preserve  
150,000 Units of Affordable Housing*

New York, NY- Housing First! welcomes AARP's endorsement of *Building Stronger 2014-2021*, an 8-year, \$8 billion plan to increase affordability, reduce homelessness and expand economic opportunity through capital investment in affordable housing. The coalition thanks AARP for their support in making affordable housing a key issue for candidates in New York City's mayoral election.

One in two 50+ voters considers the lack of affordable housing in NYC communities as a "major problem" according to a recent survey commissioned by AARP New York.

"Roughly half of all voters in the upcoming elections will be AARP members and they are looking to those they vote for to tackle key issues such as affordable housing," said Beth Finkel, State Director for AARP in New York State. "The Housing First! plan is a great first step in the right direction."

"AARP's endorsement of this affordable housing plan is important. We know that affordable housing is a critical issue in this election but mayoral candidates will pay even closer attention when AARP echoes our call for a comprehensive affordable housing initiative. It is no surprise that affordable housing is a real issue for seniors living on fixed incomes but what is a surprise is how recent federal housing cuts have disproportionately impacted programs serving the elderly like Section 8 rental assistance and 202 housing. The next mayor must dedicate resources to affordable housing where the federal government has disappointed us—this includes senior housing programs," said Co-Chair Todd A. Gomez, Senior Vice President, Bank of America Merrill Lynch.

AARP endorses the Housing First! plan which is supported by more than 150 organizations, many community-based nonprofits, tenant associations, developers, banks, advocates and other stakeholders. The affordable housing platform offers policy recommendations in a 7-point plan to build 60,000 new construction units and preserve another 90,000 existing affordable units in jeopardy of expiring regulatory use restrictions and/or in need of repair. The initiative carves out 6,000 dedicated senior housing units and 10,000 supportive housing units. An annual set-aside of 2,500 Section 8 vouchers is recommended to finance new developments, which is key to creating housing for low-income seniors and other vulnerable populations.

“About 13 million low-income senior households across the country cannot afford their housing costs and/or live in substandard housing. Many are paying more than 30 percent of their household income to maintain housing that inadequately meets their physical needs. There is no doubt that we have an affordable housing crisis in New York City but we must come together to provide safe and affordable options for the most vulnerable of New Yorkers. The Housing First! plan offers real solutions for the next mayor to address the issue of housing affordability and availability,” said Ted Houghton, Housing First! Co-Chair and Executive Director of the Supportive Housing Network of New York.

“One in every five Americans will be over age 65 by 2030, and we will face a severe shortage in appropriate housing to meet their needs in New York City. Some of the mayoral candidates have thought about expanding the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) and this a great first step in thinking about the needs of seniors,” said Rachel Fee, Coordinator of the Housing First! campaign.

Housing First! has conducted outreach to mayoral candidates and candidates for other City offices, on affordable housing policy recommendations outlined in the Housing First! report *Building Stronger 2014-2021: What the Next Mayor Can Do to Address New York City’s Housing Crisis*. The broad plan represents an informed consensus of affordable housing leaders and knowledgeable stakeholders.

Housing First! is a broad and diverse affordable housing coalition, unlike any other in New York. Founded in 2001, disparate community, business, labor, civic and religious organizations of that time successfully created a consensus plan that influenced Mayor Bloomberg to commit to the celebrated New Housing Marketplace Plan.