

Catholic Charities, Congress, housing advocates mark anniversary

Catholic Charities USA joined other housing advocates, members of Congress, and formerly homeless people to mark the 20th anniversary of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act - now known as the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act - and call upon Congress to recommit the nation to eliminate homelessness in the United States.

The Act was the first coordinated federal legislation to address homelessness, but the anniversary is a bittersweet occasion, said Maria Foscarinis, executive director of the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty and a primary architect of the McKinney Act.

“While the Act has helped thousands of Americans, it was never intended to solve homelessness,” Ms. Foscarinis said. “It was intended to be a first, emergency step to be followed by more permanent solutions.”

Unfortunately, further measures were never enacted and homelessness has increased since the 1980s, she said.

A Consensus Statement calls for the reauthorization of McKinney-Vento programs by the 110th Congress and, in the spirit of the bi-partisan authors of the original Act, declares fundamental principles necessary for a nation without homelessness: an increased supply of affordable housing, access to comprehensive social services, education and health insurance, incomes sufficient to pay for life’s necessities, and the prevention of targeted violence against our most vulnerable neighbors.

The consensus statement is available at

<http://mckinney20th.org/consensusstatement.html>.