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**Homeless Advocacy Project Fights For Nationwide Benefits For NYC-Born**

PHILADELPHIA – Homeless Advocacy Project (HAP), a nonprofit legal services organization based in Philadelphia, has settled a federal lawsuit challenging New York City’s refusal to provide copies of birth certificates for New York City-born residents of Philadelphia who lack conventional identification documents. The settlement will produce nationwide benefits by allowing people living anywhere in the U.S., who were born in New York City, to obtain their birth certificates even if they do not have a current photo-ID.

“We filed this suit to help homeless people who have a desperate need for essential services, such as housing, medical treatment and employment,” said Marsha Cohen, HAP’s executive director. “Access to those services requires state-issued IDs, but these people could not get IDs without birth certificates and could not get birth certificates without IDs. We are so pleased to have broken that vicious circle. Now, many of our own clients – as well as others across the country – will be able to take a critical first step toward improving their lives.”

The settlement makes it possible for attorneys representing homeless clients living anywhere in the U.S., but born in NYC, to obtain birth certificates for clients lacking valid photo ID.

The suit was filed on September 23, 2016, in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York in Manhattan. Joining HAP as plaintiffs were two HAP clients, Anthony Green and John Kagian, whose birth certificate applications had been denied. The settlement stipulates that NYC will issue their certificates.

HAP, whose mission is to help “end the cycle of poverty and homelessness,” was founded in 1990. In 2016, HAP’s 13-member staff and 350 volunteer attorneys provided free legal assistance to nearly 3,000 clients, which included securing more than 800 birth certificates.

HAP was represented pro bono in the suit by the global law firm Dechert LLP, led by partner Joseph Patrick Archie, former associate Jennings F. Durand and associate Tanner Kroeger. Mr. Green and Mr. Kagian were represented pro bono by the Law Office of Michael L. LiPuma in Philadelphia.

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