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**Habitat for Humanity Susquehanna aims to improve home affordability**

**in Harford and Cecil counties through new national advocacy campaign**

BEL AIR, MD (June 12, 2019) – Nearly 19 million households across the United States are spending at least half of their income on a place to live, often forgoing basic necessities such as food and health care to make ends meet. According to the United Way of Central Maryland’s 2018 ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) report, a family of four needs a combined annual income of $79,080 to support a “survival budget” in Harford County. The stability that housing should bring continues to remain out of reach for many people.

On Wednesday, Habitat for Humanity Susquehanna joined Habitat organizations across the country to launch a new national advocacy campaign aimed at improving home affordability for 10 million people in the U.S. over the next five years.

Marking significant growth in Habitat’s commitment to ensuring that everyone has a safe and decent place to call home, the Cost of Home campaign seeks to identify and improve policies and systems through coordinated advocacy efforts at the local, state and federal levels.

Cost of Home focuses on improving housing affordability across the housing continuum in four specific policy areas: increasing supply and preservation of affordable homes, equitably increasing access to credit, optimizing land use for affordable homes, and ensuring access to and development of communities of opportunity.

Habitat Susquehanna already has taken several steps towards these goals. Working with local elected officials, Habitat Susquehanna has advocated for the inclusion of housing priorities in State revitalization plans; urged local government to waive taxes and fees during the construction of affordable housing; worked with other organizations to create and fund a Community Development Fund in Maryland; expanded access to financial coaching for local low income families; and, facilitated local conversations on the needs of those with modest incomes to have decent housing.

“Harford and Cecil counties are wonderful places to call home,” said Karen Blandford, Habitat Susquehanna’s Executive Director. “But for many of our neighbors, a decent and affordable home is still a dream, whether they rent or own their dwelling. We can’t build our way out of the problem. Working with local leaders to understand and address some of the factors impacting affordability is an important part of the solution.”

More details about Habitat’s Cost of Home policy platform and campaign activation are available at **habitat.org/costofhome**.

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**About Habitat for Humanity Susquehanna, Inc.**

Habitat for Humanity Susquehanna, Inc. is an ecumenical Christian housing organization devoted to building, renovating and repairing houses in partnership with the community in Harford and Cecil counties. Since Habitat Susquehanna’s inception in 1993, we have built or rehabbed 108 homes, supported 90+ builds abroad, made more than 500 repairs for 400+ families, and served 500+ people through financial counseling. We have lifted more than 1,000 families and impacted well over 2,500 people! We are the experts in meeting the housing needs of low-income families in our area. For more information, call 410-638-4434 (Harford County) or 410-398-3399 (Cecil County) or visit www.habitatsusq.org.