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NEW BEGINNINGS' STAFF TO SPEAK AT CONGRESSIONAL BRIEFING ON YOUTH HOMELESSNESS CO-HOSTED BY U.S. SENATOR SUSAN COLLINS

New Beginnings a Maine-based homeless youth provider will discuss rural youth homelessness for Members of Congress in a Senate Briefing scheduled for May 23rd

LEWISTON, ME and WASHINGTON DC—On May 23 Topher Balderas, Outreach Program Director at New Beginnings' will visit Capitol Hill to participate in a Senate briefing co-hosted by U.S. Senator Susan Collins, U.S. Senator Jack Reed, U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy and Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal. A Way Home America, who recently partnered with New Beginnings on a 100-day challenge to examine rural youth homelessness in Franklin County, is organizing the briefing.

The Senate Briefing will run from 10:30 – 11:30 am. Balderas has been invited as a panelist to share key accomplishments and learnings from the Franklin County 100-day project where community members focused on: creating safe spaces, available 24-hours a day, for youth who are experiencing homelessness or who are in crisis; and creating a shared knowledge of the available resources for youth experiencing homelessness in Franklin County.

"The dedicated staff and volunteers at New Beginnings have served runaway and homeless youth for nearly four decades, improving lives and creating brighter futures," said **Senator Collins**. "New Beginnings made great progress completing the 100-Day Challenge, and I am pleased to have them in Washington to share their remarkable efforts to end youth homelessness and to motivate others to help our nation's vulnerable citizens. I look forward to continuing to work with New Beginnings to address our shared priority to prevent and end youth homelessness."

Balderas is humbled to have the opportunity to give Maine's homeless youth a voice in Congress. "Youth homelessness is so hard to define because the youth themselves work so hard to hide it. I am eager to share their stories on Capitol Hill so that together we can find the path forward to end youth homelessness."

New Beginnings' Executive Director Chris Bicknell remarks, "This is a tremendous opportunity to share with Congress how their strategic investments into communities across Maine allow agencies like New Beginnings to ensure that every young person in Maine is provided the opportunity to successfully transition into adulthood. Communities in Maine are making strides toward ending youth homelessness, driven by local leadership and innovation and we are eager to share the impact of our efforts."

A second briefing for members of the House is scheduled to run from 2 – 3pm. Balderas will not be a panelist for this briefing, but he will join the audience to support fellow homeless youth providers as they lend their voice to this issue.

A Way Home America, the organizer for this event, is a national initiative to build the movement to prevent and end homelessness among young people. The initiative brings together homeless youth providers like New Beginnings, advocates, researchers, government agencies, philanthropists and young people uniting behind a common goal: *In 2020, prevent and end homelessness among all youth and young adults. Ensure that homelessness among youth and young adults is rare, and if it occurs, experiences of homelessness are brief and one-time.*

About New Beginnings, Inc.: Since 1980, New Beginnings has helped build brighter futures for homeless youth in Maine. Each year, the agency provides 700 children, teens, and young adults with opportunities for the safety, connection, and growth that they need to thrive. New Beginnings' spectrum of housing and services prevent young people from becoming homeless, support families in crisis, and help vulnerable youth grow into healthy and stable adults. **To learn more, visit www.newbeginmaine.org or call 207-795-4077.** For 24-hour referrals, please call New Beginnings' youth shelter at 207-795-4070.

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