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### **NECSEMA AND HOUSE OF HOPE CDC PARTNER TO KEEP RHODE ISLAND'S HOMELESS WARM**

Convenience store association provides gas cards to Rhode Island organization in response to a skyrocketing number of homeless living in their cars

**STOUGHTON, Mass. (February 22, 2022)** – Through the generous support of its members, the New England Convenience Store & Energy Marketers Association (NECSEMA) delivered 120 gas cards to House of Hope Community Development Corporation, which will distribute the cards to an increasing number of Rhode Islanders living in their cars providing both mobility and heat during the coldest months of the year.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, almost two years ago, the number of people living on the streets has increased by nearly 52%. Between the lack of affordable housing and temporary emergency shelters being filled to capacity, those experiencing homelessness have options for sleeping limited to tents, park benches, and cars - all places not meant for human habitation.

“Upon being made aware of this dire reality, it quickly became apparent NECSEMA was in a unique position to help,” said Jonathan Shaer, Executive Director of the New England Convenience Store & Energy Marketers Association. “I’m so proud of the quick response of our members to answer this call for good, and I’m immensely grateful for House of Hope CDC’s ongoing work and their partnership. Staying warm in winter is something many of us take for granted and this is one way to help those in need.”

House of Hope CDC outreach workers have seen the number of those sleeping in their cars skyrocket in the last year. Each week, the organization’s outreach team is helping between 5-10 carloads of people including individuals, couples, people with pets, and many, sadly, with children. These gas cards are needed more than ever before to avoid the frightening reality of freezing to death during the winter months.

“On behalf of the staff, Board of Directors and those we serve, House of Hope extends its sincere gratitude and appreciation to the members of New England Convenience Store & Energy Marketers Association. These gas cards provide so much more than just fuel for those living in their cars; it is providing a lifesaving resource. Thank you for being the power behind our work

and believing in our mission,” said Melissa Behm, Fund Development Manager for House of Hope CDC.

NECSEMA’s affiliate members in Rhode Island answered the call to support this partnership with House of Hope CDC, including Shell Oil Company, ExxonMobil, Gulf Oil, Sunoco Inc., CITGO Petroleum and Valero Marketing.

“Sunoco is grateful for the opportunity to work with NECSEMA to support the House of Hope’s work with the homeless population in Rhode Island,” said Luigi Mandarino, Regional Sales Director for Sunoco. “The impactful work House of Hope does is the type of meaningful work we are supportive of in the local communities where we operate and we hope that the gas cards provide some needed relief.”

“As a northeast based company, we are grateful for the work that House of Hope is doing in our local communities. Gulf is committed to giving back in meaningful ways to the communities we operate in, and we appreciate the work NECSEMA has done to bring together this initiative,” said Nikki Fales, VP of Marketing & Payments at Gulf Oil.

The New England Convenience Store & Energy Marketers Association is a non-profit trade association for the convenience store and transportation fuels industries. Its members serve every community across New England by retailing and wholesaling the products and services its customers want and need often when needed most.

House of Hope CDC is a non-profit, community development corporation in Rhode Island that works to prevent and end homelessness. The organization offers affordable housing and life changing services. For more information visit [www.houseofhopecdc.org](http://www.houseofhopecdc.org).

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