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MEDIA ADVISORY

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Research Report to Be Released Evaluating \$ 160 Million in Welfare-to-Work Contracts

“Missing the Mark” Report Finds HRA’s Back to Work Program Fails

*Clients in the Program, Vendors Implementing the Program and Taxpayers Funding the Program
City Called on to Make Systemic and Implementation Improvements
As Economy Suffers and Contract Renewal Approaches*

What: Community Voices Heard (CVH) will release its new report *Missing the Mark: An Examination of NYC’s Back to Work Program and Its Effectiveness In Meeting Employment Goals for Welfare Recipients*.

This report and briefing will highlight the results of a research project that explored the effectiveness of current job readiness and job placement programs contracted by the City of New York’s Human Resources Administration (HRA) to move people from welfare to work. The Back to Work Program began in 2006 as the replacement program for the former Employment Services and Placement (ESP) Program upon which an earlier report, *The Revolving Door*, was based. This new report evaluates the system’s performance in meeting its objectives, discusses barriers and problems vendors encounter in providing services, and offers recommendations to improve the services the system provides. The findings are based on discussions with 954 welfare recipients in the program, in-depth focus groups and phone surveys with over 200 of those participants, one-on-one interviews with the program vendors, and an examination of HRA reports and statistics.

When: Thursday, November 13th, 2008
10:00 AM – 11:30 AM

Where: BK Memorial Conference Room, North Star Fund
520 Eighth Avenue, Floor 22 (between 36th and 37th Streets)

Why: While Mayor Bloomberg’s Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) supports pilot initiatives to tackle poverty, welfare recipients and failing HRA programs are overlooked. HRA refers approximately 8,500 employable welfare applicants and 4,300 employable recipients (a total of 12,800 per month or 153,600 per year) to the Back to Work Program. In its first 3 years, \$160 million was allocated for the program in and an additional \$160 million is likely to be allocated for the renewals in 2009. In an era of tightening budgets and diminishing employment opportunities in low-income communities, it is critical that available funding is used in the most effective way.

Who: Community Voices Heard is a grassroots membership organization of people on welfare and other low-income people. Our research is inspired by our membership and carried out by professional researchers.