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***** PRESS RELEASE *****

**Mayor Fulop & Health Officials Announce New Partnership with
the Clinton Global Initiative to Save Lives; Leveraging Community
Partnerships to Combat Addiction & Overdose Crisis**

*Applications to Open for Empowering Faith Leaders Program to Deploy
Evidence-Based, Ground-level Actions*

JERSEY CITY - Today, **Mayor Steven M. Fulop** and the **Department of Health and Human Services** announced a new partnership with the **Clinton Global Initiative's (CGI) Overdose Response Network** to unite and empower trusted faith-based leaders with effective tools to help combat the addiction and overdose crisis gripping the nation.

Utilizing community-based and evidence-informed approaches, the **Empowering Faith Leaders Program** will directly engage and train community leaders across Jersey City's diverse range of practiced religions to build the skills and tools to deploy ground-level actions into substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery. Applications will be available beginning November 2nd to fill the 20 available spots.

"As the most diverse municipality in the state, we want to empower our extensive network of faith leaders who are the critical lifelines and trusted advisors that people turn to for guidance during hardship, such as drug and alcohol addiction. By leveraging our community resources, we are creating an impactful program in partnership with The Clinton Foundation that will help residents live healthier and more productive lives," said **Mayor Fulop**.

Faith leaders are a trusted source of support and information who can influence attitudes and practices at the individual, household, and community levels. Faith leaders can use their unique and powerful platform to shatter the stigma that all too often keeps addiction in the shadows and

blocks access to supportive resources. When our community leaders are given adequate tools to respond, they become a vital part of the solution to ending addiction and the overdose crisis.

Jersey City is one of three new communities selected for this program with funding through the Clinton Foundation. Under the program, participants will learn about local prevention, treatment, recovery, and harm reduction resources. The partnership will also implement community-based engagement projects to raise awareness about addiction and the overdose crisis.

“Faith leaders play an important role in turning the tide on the overdose crisis that has reached unprecedented levels in this country. Many people turn to their faith leaders during times of crisis for guidance and hope, and when they are prepared to provide effective support, they can save lives. We know that many faith leaders aren’t taught how to respond to these issues in seminary, and our program fills this gap by training and mobilizing them to address these issues with evidence-informed and compassionate approaches,” added **Megan Affrunti, Senior Director of Substance Use Disorders and Recovery at CGI’s Overdose Response Network.**

The Empowering Faith Leaders Program in Jersey City will build community leaders’ knowledge, skills, and confidence to address addiction and the overdose crisis. Beginning in January 2024, leaders from Jersey City’s Department of Health and Human Services and CGI will lead a cohort of 20 faith leaders through in-person sessions on a range of topics related to substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery over six to eight months.

Each faith-based organization involved in the program will receive \$2,000 in funding from CGI’s Overdose Response Network, along with the technical support to plan and execute a community-based engagement project to bring the information and resources back to their community. Faith leaders receive education and training on a wide range of topics related to addiction, becoming trainers in naloxone administration, learning how to combat stigma, and connecting with local service providers.

“We have more than doubled our services over the past three years to meet the skyrocketing demand for mental health and addiction services amid COVID, and this Empowerment Program is an important next step in our continued progress in building bridges across communities to more directly address our residents’ wide range of issues and needs,” added **Stacey Flanagan, Director of the Department of Health and Human Services.** “This program will explore how different faith traditions view substance use, addiction, and recovery to build bridges across communities.”

For over a decade, the Clinton Foundation has worked to address the overdose crisis in the United States by increasing education and awareness to decrease stigma and curb addiction while providing communities with the tools they need to support and save lives. This work has included partnerships with drug manufacturers to make lifesaving opioid overdose reversal drugs available to community leaders and community responders nationwide, partnerships with advocates and research institutions to advance policy solutions, and training and resources for community leaders. CGI has been a successful initiative of the Clinton Foundation, and has been working with communities across the U.S. for over five years, including Little Rock, Arkansas;

Houston, Texas; Jacksonville, Florida; Atlanta, Georgia; Athens, Georgia; Savannah, Georgia; and more.

Chaplains interested in the Empowering Faith Leaders Program can reach out to HHS directly by emailing Jessica Garita at JGarita@jcnj.org.

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About The Clinton Foundation

Building on a lifetime of public service, President Clinton established the Clinton Foundation on the simple belief that everyone deserves a chance to succeed, everyone has a responsibility to act, and we all do better when we work together. For more than two decades, those values have energized the Foundation's efforts to address big challenges, create new opportunities, and make a difference in people's lives across the United States and around the world. As an operating foundation, our programs and the partnerships we build work to expand economic opportunity, improve public health, confront the climate crisis, and inspire citizen engagement and service.

All media inquiries should be directed to Kimberly Scalcione at KScalcione@jcnj.org.