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CONTACT: Angye Reed
(267) 233-5163

Amid National Opioid Crisis, City Jeopardizes Philadelphia's Oldest Addictions Center

After thirty years of patience and decades of patching a leaking roof and falling façade, the West Philadelphia Community Health Consortium has notified the City that its failure to repair its oldest opioid treatment center is putting Consortium clients and staff in danger. In a letter dated May 17, the City was reminded that it passed an ordinance thirty years ago authorizing the transfer of the 451 University Avenue building to the Consortium. That ordinance was followed in November by a unanimous resolution of City Council endorsing the transfer of this building which has provided vitally necessary treatment of opioid addiction in the city through the administrations of five Philadelphia mayors. The Consortium has now publically put the City on notice that deferred maintenance at the building places at risk the very opioid patients the City purports to care about. Without a transfer of ownership of 451 to the Consortium consistent with the City ordinance and City Council resolution, the Consortium cannot make crucial building repairs which are so serious, they jeopardize patients and staff. While the City made available \$350,000 for stop gap repairs, the City's total cost estimate for proper repairs, is estimated at \$1.9 million.

In its five decades-long history, the Consortium has helped over 250,000 people throughout the tristate area overcome the challenges of mental illness, intellectual disabilities and substance abuse. From their home base in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, they have created a compelling record of helping people reach their full potential while strengthening Philadelphia communities, one person at a time, one family at a time.

Way before the headlines, they have been on the front-lines of the current opioid addiction crisis. The Consortium was the first methadone clinic in the state of Pennsylvania and those treatments are provided in the 451 building which is in a dangerous state of disrepair.

“By depriving us of our rightful ownership of the 451 building, The City of Philadelphia is jeopardizing us in every way. They are jeopardizing the people seeking treatment, our staff and our ability to provide a safe and proper environment,” said Consortium President and CEO, John F. White, Jr. “In this time of national opioid crisis, the Consortium, like many other non-profits, struggles to do its crucial job with limited budgets and resources. And the City can resolve this issue by simply following the law. I assure you, we will have in this century, the building given to us, in the last century.”

The Consortium has six behavioral health centers located in Philadelphia, empowering people with state-of-the-art behavioral health counseling. They are also noted for their school programs, helping young people deal with various and sometimes difficult societal issues, while teaching coping mechanisms that help them maintain a substance-free life.

Mr. White's letter to Philadelphia Mayor Kenney and more background documentation is contained in this package including the latest City Council resolution outlining this 30 year struggle.