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Pisgah Legals Managing Attorney Elected Chairman of the North Carolina Housing Coalition

Robin Merrell has 18 years experience working with housing issues

(Asheville, NC) –Pisgah Legal Services Managing Attorney Robin Merrell is an advocate and attorney representing low-income people living in low income in need of legal assistance. In October she was elected chairman for the North Carolina Housing Coalition where she will be advocating for statewide policies to increase the supply of safe, affordable housing and decrease the number of homeless residents.

“This is a time when housing is a critical need across the state,” says Merrell. “Homes have been ravaged by hurricanes; there is a statewide lack of affordable, quality housing; a growing divide between people with and without means, and a continuing growth of North Carolina’s population. These are all contributing factors to the housing crisis.”

The [North Carolina Housing Coalition](#) is a Raleigh based nonprofit with a mission to lead a movement to ensure that every North Carolinian has a home in which to live with dignity and opportunity. “The Coalition builds a network of people across the state who have an interest in housing,” explains Merrell. “The coalition members are diverse. We are bankers, developers, advocates, housing counselor and those who work with the homeless and many others who have come together to use our strengths to tackle this problem in a comprehensive way. We all want families to be able to thrive and for children to be successful in school and life and we know that housing is a foundation for this success.”

Eighteen years ago Merrell began working at Pisgah Legal Services, a nonprofit that provides free civil legal assistance to prevent homelessness, stop domestic abuse, and increase access to healthcare for low income people living in WNC.

“At Pisgah Legal Services, we are always interested in opportunities to collaborate with other organizations that are committed to assisting lower income people to improve their lives, like the N.C. Housing Coalition,” says Pisgah Legal Services Executive Director, Jim Barrett. “We are

proud that with Robin's leadership, the NC Housing Coalition will continue to help all North Carolinians secure decent and affordable housing."

Pisgah Legal primarily serves six counties including Buncombe, which allows Merrell the perspective that includes both metropolitan and rural areas. "The issues are very different between the two areas, and my experience working both with subsidized housing and the private market allows me to understand more clearly how each part of our state has unique housing needs and policies."

"We don't have enough housing stock that is affordable to people at lower to middle incomes," she continues. "We don't have enough subsidies for people at the lowest incomes. We think of homelessness as a very complex issue, and it is, but at its core it is about being without a home. The antidote to that is having a home."

When asked what she hopes for the future of the coalition during her tenure as board chair, she says she wants to grow its membership of stakeholders invested in the mission of ensuring quality housing for North Carolinians. She is excited by the opportunity to help inform decisions on a statewide level that will have a ripple effect in Western North Carolina.

Since 1978, PLS has helped low-income people meet their basic needs, such as protection from domestic violence, avoiding homelessness, finding safe housing, accessing health care and increasing income. Pisgah Legal Services has 22 attorneys on staff, and relies heavily on the pro bono legal services of approximately 300 volunteer attorneys and the help of more than 100 office and navigator volunteers.

The nonprofit's main service area includes [six counties in WNC](#), with offices in Asheville, Brevard, Hendersonville, Marshall and Rutherfordton. Pisgah Legal's immigration work extends to seventeen counties in the westernmost part of the state.

For more information, call Pisgah Legal Services at 828-253-0406 or toll free at 800-489-6144 or go to www.pisgahlegal.org.

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