

Subject: HOMELESSNESS: Bicameral Sign-On Letter to the President on Proven and Positive Alternatives to Criminalization of Homelessness



John Threlkeld <jthrelkeld@naeh.org>
to William Sweeney, Graham Pruss

8:51AM (3 hot

You are viewing an attached message. Gmail can't verify the authenticity of attached messages.

Perhaps if you have time and interest, you could push the attached sign on letter to the President with your federal elected officials? Here's my own propaganda.

We ask your Senators / Representative to sign on to this bicameral letter to the President in support of alternatives to criminalization. The Senate effort is led by Senator Wyden (OR) and staffed by Madison Moskowitz, Madison.Moskowitz@wyden.senate.gov. The House effort is led by Representative Bonamici (D-OR-1) and staffed by Andrew.Dunn@mail.house.gov.

This respectfully-written and modestly-worded Congressional sign-on letter to the President is an attempt to promote alternatives to criminalization of homelessness—the fining, arresting, or jailing of people experiencing homelessness being in public spaces when jurisdictions have failed to provide adequate shelter or housing options.

Punishing unhoused individuals for sleeping outside, including when there are no adequate shelter or housing options, does not end homelessness. In fact, studies show that imposition of criminal citations and incarceration worsens the homelessness crisis. Having a criminal record adds barriers to employment, stable housing, and government benefits. Fines and other legal fees can also exacerbate financial instability and further compromise housing stability. Rather than helping people to regain housing, obtain employment, or obtain access needed for treatment and services, criminalization creates a costly revolving door that circulates individuals experiencing homelessness from the streets through the criminal justice system and back. Not only is it less effective, but criminalization also costs taxpayers and communities more than providing housing and voluntary home- and community-based services.

This Congressional sign-on letter to the President does not ask

1. lawmakers to argue about the *Grants Pass v. Johnson* Supreme Court case, or
2. the President to prevent states and localities from criminalizing homelessness, let alone condemn specific criminalization efforts.

Instead, the letter urges the President to

1. address the principal cause of homelessness—the lack of affordable housing—through investments in proven housing and homelessness programs;
2. promote additional health care measures in order to help safely and securely house people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, particularly those dealing with mental illness and substance use;
3. use the federal government as an example for how to humanely address unsheltered homelessness on federal property by connecting people with housing and services; and
4. provide states and localities struggling with homelessness with more resources in the form of vouchers and surplus properties and less red tape and bureaucratic conflict.