

FW: Join Us By Taking a Stand Against the Criminalization of Homelessness

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To:Updates <updates@gladesinitiative.org>

From: PBC Homeless and Housing Alliance <communityservices@pbcgov.org>

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To: Karis Engle <kengle@gladesinitiative.org>

Subject: Join Us By Taking a Stand Against the Criminalization of Homelessness

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HOMELESS AND HOUSING ALLIANCE OF PALM BEACH COUNTY

Homeless and Housing Alliance (HHA) Statement on Criminalization of Homelessness/Grants Pass, Oregon v. Johnson

In these challenging times, we are confronted with the egregious reality that individuals experiencing homelessness are being penalized for their circumstances. The escalating costs of rent, insurance, and basic necessities, coupled with stagnant wages, have driven many from their homes and into the streets. The upcoming Supreme Court consideration of Grant Pass, Oregon v. Johnson, forces us, as Americans, to reconsider our basic rights.

As Palm Beach County's Continuum of Care, the Homeless and Housing Alliance (HHA) recognizes the profound implications of the Supreme Court's decision to hear this case. It is a decision that will not only shape the landscape of homelessness in our nation but also directly impact the way our member organizations help those in need.

At present, the Eighth Amendment safeguards individuals experiencing homelessness from cruel and unusual punishment, excessive fines, and reprisals for simply existing in public spaces when no alternative shelter is available. However, with the advent of Grants Pass v. Johnson, these protections are under threat.

The HHA vehemently upholds the principles of human dignity and stands in staunch opposition to the criminalization of homelessness. We believe that every individual deserves access to safe and secure housing, and punitive measures only serve to exacerbate the already dire challenges faced by those without homes.

The forthcoming Supreme Court case of Grants Pass v. Johnson represents a pivotal moment in our nation's approach to homelessness. With nearly four decades having passed since the last significant examination of this issue before the highest court, the outcome of this case carries immense weight. We assert that punitive measures, such as criminalization, only perpetuate cycles of poverty and marginalization, further entrenching individuals in their plight.

Our shared goal of ending homelessness in our community requires all stakeholders to work together to find proactive solutions. We urge policymakers and communities to embrace compassionate, evidence-based strategies that prioritize providing housing, support services, and opportunities for individuals to rebuild their lives with dignity and respect.

We, the Homeless and Housing Alliance, stand united in advocating for the rights and welfare of individuals experiencing homelessness and oppose measures aimed at criminalizing those without a place to call home.

Respectfully submitted,



Elizabeth Jo Miller
HHA President



Jennifer Sellars, LCSW
HHA Advocacy Pillar Chair