

A public statement from HopePHL regarding the recent US Supreme Court ruling on *City of Grants Pass v. Johnson*.

July 2, 2024

According to the Declaration of Independence, published on July 4, 1776, in this country:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

Yet, we approach Independence Day this year, not with excitement, but with disappointment following the US Supreme Court’s 6-3 ruling on *City of Grants Pass v. Johnson* that overturned protections for people experiencing homelessness. To allow states and localities to criminalize experiencing homelessness is to enable them to tread on these “unalienable rights.”

For many years, vagrancy laws have increased the difficulty in finding housing and employment after incarceration. At HopePHL we know this from decades of providing housing services, advocacy, and hosting criminal record expungement clinics with our partners. When the record expungement program first began, our staff were surprised at the number of older adults seeking help, because they could no longer afford market rate housing on a fixed income, and a criminal record excluded them from subsidized housing altogether in their retirement years. Youth and young adults with criminal records fare no better with obtaining housing or jobs. Securing housing or employment to support staying housed, are the leading causes for seeking record expungement.

We also know that families experiencing homelessness already face legal repercussions for their lack of housing. They often choose to live doubled-up with other families, in cars, or in places without utilities to keep their family together, and their children out of the foster care system.

Threats, fines and incarceration will not suddenly prevent or resolve homelessness for the hundreds of thousands of people in the USA who do not know where they will lay their head to rest at the end of the day. We already know what works, but the solution demands more resources, coordinated effort, and the political will to end the inhumanity of homelessness.

1. **Investment in building and maintaining** affordable housing, supportive housing, and temporary housing.
2. Re-investing in **service rich environments** with trained professionals onsite offering trauma-informed services and programs.
3. Increasing investments in **Community Development Corporations**.
4. **Continuing prevention, diversion, and rapid-rehousing programs, but with added support services.**

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5. **High-quality education** for all, starting at the youngest age.
6. Investing in programs that **create pathways to family-supporting wages**.

The amount of affordable housing needed to end homelessness simply does not exist in 2024. It is time to come together to end homelessness, not increase obstacles to their prosperity.

We urge you to follow these groups and join us in our call for homes for everyone. To support HopePHL's efforts directly, please contact Jacqui Flynn at jflynn@hopephl.org.

National Center on Family Homelessness

(<https://www.air.org/centers/national-center-family-homelessness>)

Schoolhouse Connection (<https://schoolhouseconnection.org/>)

Corporation for Supportive Housing (<https://www.csh.org/>)

National Alliance to End Homelessness (<https://endhomelessness.org/>)