

NATIONAL LAW CENTER ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY

HOUSING NOT HANDCUFFS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nationwide Effort Calls for Housing, Not Handcuffs

(August 28, 2018, Washington, DC) – A [nationwide effort](#) to strike down bans on panhandling commenced today as part of the [Housing Not Handcuffs Campaign](#). Advocates in a dozen states are demanding more than 200 cities repeal panhandling bans and redirect resources to housing and other support for people experiencing homelessness.

The 2015 Supreme Court decision in *Reed v. Gilbert* held that if an ordinance regulates speech differently based on its content—like whether it asks for a donation versus asking for directions—it is subject to the strictest level of review, and is unlikely to be found constitutional. Since the 2015 ruling, 100 percent of lawsuits against cities with panhandling bans have been successful in striking down the bans—25 total to date, and at least an additional 31 communities have repealed their ordinances.

“No one wants to see poor people have to beg for money,” said Maria Foscarinis, executive director at the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty. “But people experiencing poverty have the same rights as anyone else, and they deserve to have their rights protected.”

The Law Center is coordinating with 18 legal organizations in 12 states to send letters to more than 240 communities with panhandling ordinances similar to the ones that have been found unconstitutional demanding those laws be repealed.

“It should never be outlawed for a fellow human to ask for help,” said Eric Tars, senior attorney at the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty. “Criminalizing begging doesn’t address the underlying reasons why people need to ask for help in the first place—addressing those causes is much more effective, more consistent with the Constitution, and costs less in the long run too.”

The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, National Coalition for the Homeless, and more than 100 other organizations launched the Housing Not Handcuffs campaign in 2016 to place emphasis on housing as a solution to homelessness instead of punishing homeless people with fines and fees.

For more information on the Housing Not Handcuffs Campaign, visit www.housingnothandcuffs.org. For more information on the effort on panhandling, see nlchp.org/panhandling.

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[The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty](#) (the Law Center) is the only national organization dedicated solely to using the power of the law to prevent and end homelessness. With the support of a large network of pro bono lawyers, we address the immediate and long-term needs of people who are homeless or at risk through outreach and training, advocacy, impact litigation, and public education.