

HOUSING NOT HANDCUFFS

e-news update

January 2019

Dear Supporters and Endorsers of the Housing Not Handcuffs Campaign,

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#HNH  

This has been a busy time for the Housing Not Handcuffs Campaign, with multiple communities stopping enforcement of and even repealing their criminalization laws and beginning to explore shelter, housing, and other alternatives! See stories below. Also, the Campaign continues to grow, with over 800 endorsements so far! [Keep encouraging your friends, colleagues, and elected officials to endorse.](#)

If you have submissions for the next newsletter, please fill out [this Google form](#) by **February 18th.**

Campaign Updates

Newark Passes Right to Counsel

Last month, the Newark City Council passed Mayor Ras Baracka's initiative to provide legal representation to low income residents facing eviction in housing court, making Newark the first city in the state and the third in the country to pass a "Right to Counsel" ordinance. [Ironbound Community Corporation](#), [Newark Community Development Network](#), [New Community](#), [Homes for All Newark](#), [Rutgers Center on Law, Inequality & Metropolitan Equity](#), [Essex-Newark Legal Services](#), and [Seton Hall Law School](#) all worked with the City to achieve this victory. In Essex County, 40,000 eviction cases are filed annually with about half involving Newark residents, mostly people of color. While landlords can usually afford lawyers, 99% of tenants do not hire lawyers, leading to tenant eviction a majority of the time. Right to Counsel leads to fewer evictions, which in turn helps prevent homelessness.

Syracuse Pursues Constructive Solutions to Panhandling

In the summer, Onondaga County (NY) Legislators proposed a law against aggressive panhandling. But after extensive meetings with social services providers and homeless advocates, including the Law Center's Legal Director Eric Tars, they have decided to stop pursuing the criminalization of homelessness and instead offer more constructive, long-term solutions. On

December 12th, Syracuse city and Onondaga county officials announced a \$200,000 pilot program to provide people who are panhandling with day-labor jobs. Through the pilot program, up to eight individuals will be offered transportation to work sites three days a week. The aim of the program is to provide connections to healthcare services or drug treatment in addition to wages. The Law Center will continue working with the City of Syracuse to gather data on the program's effectiveness.

Panhandling Campaign Updates

Polk County, Florida repealed its panhandling ordinance after receiving a letter from the [ACLU of Florida](#), [Southern Legal Counsel](#), [Florida Public Defender Association](#), [Florida Legal Services](#), [National Lawyers Guild South Florida Chapter](#), the [Housing Umbrella Group](#), and [NLCHP](#) as part of HNH's national Panhandling Campaign. Also, due to pressure from the [ACLU of Ohio](#) and NLCHP, Canton, Ohio joined the growing list of cities that have overturned its panhandling ordinances.

Congressional Briefing on Extreme Poverty in the United States: A Human Rights Response



(From left to right: Roberto Borrero, Catherine Flowers, Breana Lipscomb, Marcia Johnson-Blanco, Eric Tars, Annette Martinez Orabona, Jennifer Turner)

On Monday, January 28th, a panel of human rights advocates gathered to give a briefing on the findings from the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty & Human Rights report. The Special Rapporteur, Philip Alston, conducted an official visit to the U.S. last year. His final mission report finds the vast inequality and hardship that millions of people living in poverty face daily violates numerous human rights and provides recommendations on how the government should fulfill its obligations to address these hardships and disparities.

Advocates from the [Alabama Center for Rural Enterprise](#), [US Human Rights](#)

[Network](#), [Center for Reproductive Rights](#), [Human Rights Clinic of the Inter-American University of Puerto Rico](#), [National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty](#), and the [ACLU Human Rights Program](#) discussed the implications of the Special Rapporteur's findings on the work of the 116th Congress to address poverty and inequality in the United States. The advocates discussed the criminalization of homelessness, how intersectionality plays into poverty, how approaches to ending rural and urban poverty can differ, and much more. Representative Terri Sewell of Alabama's 7th Congressional District gave her remarks and stayed for the panel discussion. The briefing had a great turnout with standing room only! Click [here](#) to access the Special Rapporteur's full report.

Legislative Action by New Community Organization in Rhode Island

Submitted by [Rhode Island Users Union](#)

In 2018, an organization was formed in Rhode Island called the Rhode Island Users Union. Comprised of people with lived experience with drugs, incorporated as a 501(c)3 not-for-profit, this organization has taken the lead in the fight to reform drug policy and make conditions safer for everyone. This past year, the organization took on the fight to resist drug induced homicide laws in the state of Rhode Island, and introduced its own piece of legislation-one that would expand the criminal and civil protections of the Good Samaritan Law to possession and distribution of narcotics testing supplies, and also protects a person assisting another person in determining the contents of their drugs. This bill was passed with nearly unanimous support from the legislature in less than 3 months. This year, Rhode Island Users Union has taken the fight in a broader criminal justice reform approach, by introducing legislation that will spell out a process by which individuals who have been adversely affected by the war on drugs, and those who have had criminal history, can get access to a pardon system that is fair and equitable- with means-tested access. This includes a right to representation, public hearings, and in some cases- special considerations and expedited access- particularly for those whom are struggling to access housing, in part to address an aging sex offender population that lacks access to housing opportunities, and to also allow folks who have been prosecuted under outdated sentencing guidelines to have their sentences and eligibility reconsidered under current law. This would allow for the state to release from sentence inmates who are serving time for crimes which no longer are considered as severe by society. This is an essential and substantial step to increase access to housing and job opportunities for former convicts, and gives incentive for folks to work towards community reintegration.

Announcements

[Alone Without A Home Webinar](#)

Please register for Alone Without A Home: A State-by-State Review of Laws Affecting Unaccompanied Youth on **Feb 13, 2019 1:00 PM EST** at:
<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2633661698035479299>

The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty and National Network for Youth are issuing an updated edition of their Alone Without A Home report, which reviews the state of current law in 13 key issue areas that affect the lives and future prospects of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness, in all 50 U.S. states and six territories. The report offers an overview of the range of approaches taken by states since the last update in 2012 and the relative prevalence of these approaches, revealing significant differences in many cases. The report also provides recommendations for policy change in each of the areas, with a view towards strengthening the supports available to unaccompanied youth.

This webinar will provide an overview of the report including highlights of policies and recommendations, as well as featuring the voice of a youth with direct experience of the barriers faced by youth living on their own.

Presenters:

Marta Beresin, [National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty](#)

Amy Louttit, [National Network for Youth](#)

Eric Tars, [National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty](#)

Youth Speaker to be announced

Use of Campaign Branding

We encourage campaign endorsers to link relevant events to the national Housing Not Handcuffs campaign. Please see the guidelines for branding your materials [here](#).

HOUSING
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In the News

[What Can Seattle Learn from Cities Where Homelessness Has Dropped?](#)

January 24, 2019

[Council Overrides Mayoral Veto; Fare Evasion Soon A \\$50 Civil Fine](#)

January 22, 2019

[SF's \\$185 Million Windfall Should go to Housing and Homelessness](#)

January 21, 2019

[Maxine Waters Wants \\$13.27 Billion to End Homelessness \(But No Money for a Wall\)](#)

January 17, 2019

[National Law Center Letter to City of Redding](#)

January 15, 2019

[Homelessness can be Solved -- and We Know How to do it](#)

December 30, 2018

[How Orange County Took Big Steps in 2018 to Address Homelessness](#)

December 28, 2018

[You're Homeless, but you Have to Leave the Hospital. Where do you go?](#)

December 24, 2018

[Boise Charts New Course to Address Homelessness](#)

December 22, 2018

[Volunteers Laid Foundation for Successful Homeless Shelter in Cortez](#)

December 22, 2018

[Berkeley Teen Saw Homelessness Every Day. Ignoring it was Not an Option](#)

December 20, 2018

[Serious Concerns About the Nomination of William Barr to be Attorney General of the United States](#)

December 20, 2018

**NATIONAL LAW CENTER
ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY**

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