

Advocacy Recommendations for Summer Solstice Celebrations

We know that – with affordable housing, adequate incomes, health care, and supportive services – we can end homelessness not only for individuals, but also as a society. The critical supports which have enabled some of our friends and neighbors to move out of homelessness are not broadly accessible, but they could be. Summer Solstice Success Celebrations highlight the stories of those who have overcome homelessness despite the odds, which give us the hope that together we can find the strength to create the political will to end homelessness for everyone. The fight for justice comes not from despair; it comes from hope – the hope that we can achieve justice for everyone.

Here are recommendations for how we achieve health and housing justice:

- 1. Housing promotes positive health outcomes, is a fundamental need and a basic right.**
 - a. Local, state and federal governments should invest in affordable housing for all its residents, to include those at the lowest income levels.
 - b. Adequate supports to maintain housing (through a Housing First approach) should be available to those who need them in order to prevent homelessness.
- 2. Health care is a human right that should be provided to all no matter ability to pay.**
 - a. States that have not yet expanded Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act must do so in order to facilitate the breadth of health care services for this population (who are often uninsured).
 - b. States and the federal governments should move toward single payer health care financing – expanded and improved Medicare for all – to eliminate remaining coverage gaps and financial barriers.
- 3. Mental health and substance use treatment can help prevent homelessness, or enable people to move out of homelessness. Treatment services should be available to all no matter ability to pay.**
 - a. States and local communities should ensure there is adequate capacity to provide substance use and mental health treatment for those who need it, to include intensive, residential programs.
 - b. Harm reduction programs – including ready availability of naloxone, needle exchange, and safe injection sites – should be implemented.
- 4. The criminalization of homelessness creates additional barriers to housing and employment.**
 - a. Jurisdictions should not pass laws that criminalize homelessness because arrests and displacement do nothing to solve the problem, and only serve to place restrictions on jobs and housing.
 - b. Law enforcement should focus on protecting vulnerable people, rather than on enforcing ordinances intended to limit their presence in public spaces.
- 5. Local jurisdictions and providers should promote successful models of housing and health care through storytelling and data sharing with other jurisdictions, funders, and legislators to expand success opportunities.**
- 6. Local jurisdictions and providers should develop systems to track and record data on housing status and outcome measurements to demonstrate that housing promotes positive health.**