

An Open Letter to President Trump from National Homeless Advocates

September 26, 2019

Dear President Trump,

Thank you for highlighting the crisis of homelessness that many of our cities are facing. We agree with you that homelessness is a disgrace and must be eradicated. While ending homelessness will require cooperation at all levels of government, your office holds considerable power and influence over many of the programs and policies that are key to achieving this goal.

As a coalition of advocates working to end homelessness, we represent a wide range of organizations that work on the front lines of health care, housing and shelter, education, and social services that support individuals experiencing homelessness. We write you this open letter in response to your recent report, *The State of Homelessness in America* from the Council of Economic Advisers, because its analysis is faulty and its conclusions are so woefully inadequate.

First and foremost, homelessness is caused by the lack of affordable housing targeted to those with the lowest incomes. We are deeply concerned that the report does not acknowledge this, nor does it propose increasing federal funding for housing assistance or advancing any other federal policy solution that makes housing more affordable for very low-income people. While reducing some local land-use restrictions that impede housing development for low-income people--such as exclusionary zoning that disallows multi-family housing--is an important part of the solution, these changes need to be paired with significant capital investments at the federal level.

Second, we are also concerned that the recommendations made in the report, such as an increase in policing and a focus on "individual factors" such as mental health and poverty, only serve to stigmatize those without homes and do little to actually address the underlying causes of homelessness. In addition, creating large institutional shelters and using the policy to force people off the streets into these settings is counterproductive and inhumane.

We welcome an opportunity to talk with you and your team of advisors to discuss a broader set of solutions to homelessness. We believe we'll have a much greater chance at reducing homelessness in the United States by working together to implement constructive changes. Please contact Maria Foscarinis, Esq., Executive Director, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, at mfoscarinis@nlchp.org or at 202-638-2535.

Sincerely,

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