

## STATE CANDIDATE LETTER

Dear Candidate:

As an organization dedicated to preventing and ending homelessness, **we write to request you to address the issue of homelessness and housing among very low-income people as you campaign for state office.** Homelessness is an issue that has reached a crisis level in this country and in **[your state]**.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development estimates that in 2018, **[statewide PIT Count numbers]** people were homeless on any given night in **[your state]**, **[number of unsheltered in PIT count]** of which did not have access to emergency shelter. Throughout the year in the US over 1.5 million people experience homelessness, 8 million households spend more than half their income on rent, and many other households are doubled up with family and friends because they can't afford a place of their own. Everyone in our community is impacted by homelessness, but especially vulnerable individuals and families, people with disabilities and other health issues, unaccompanied youth, veterans, and many others.

Homelessness has become an epidemic across this country because of massive disinvestments in affordable housing, stagnant wages, rising housing costs, inaccessible health care, unhealthy food, systemic racism, and countless other policy decisions that have yielded poor outcomes. It is a disgrace that our policymakers have allowed people to live and die on the streets of the wealthiest country in the history of the world when clearly we have the resources for a better standard of living for all those in our communities. As a candidate for office, we ask you to explicitly lay out your plans for how you will address this crisis.

*We thank you for addressing **XX** issue on your website and hope you can further elaborate on....*

### **Homelessness**

- What factors create and perpetuate homelessness in your state?
- As we work to fix the current broken federal housing and homeless systems, what will you do in the short-term for those who will have no home tonight in our community?
- Many people who are unable to access shelter are forced to create community through encampments. How do you plan to balance public health/safety with individual's rights and dignity?
- In a growing number of places across the country it is a crime to sleep in public spaces, sit for longer than a few minutes at a time, or engage in many other life-sustaining activities in public. How will you respond to those who want to increase the criminalization of homelessness in our community?
- Individuals living on the streets have limited access to hygiene facilities (i.e. restrooms, showers, laundry), which creates public health concerns, as well as adding to the lack of dignity and stigma of homelessness. How will you expand access?

### **Housing**

- As the gap between housing costs and income levels continue to widen, more people are at risk for experiencing homelessness. How do you plan to address our community's severe affordable housing crisis, which disproportionately affects those considered extremely low income?
- How will you supplement the limited federal resources to increase affordable housing?

- Housing policy has historically been used to segregate and deprive marginalized communities, particularly communities of color. How will you take a more equitable approach to development to address housing disparities?

### **Social Determinants of Health**

- Outside of insurance coverage, people experiencing homelessness face many barriers to good health which include limited access to transportation, healthy food, stable housing, and more. What is your plan to ensure that social determinants of health are recognized and embedded within our health care system and community services?
- People experiencing homelessness combat many barriers to finding and maintaining employment and our [your local minimum wage] minimum wage is not enough to afford a modest apartment in our community. How do you plan to address wages and access to jobs for those who already face many challenges?
- Low-income communities have higher level of stress and mental health concerns. How will you ensure access to mental health services for everyone in the community?
- Our community, like many others, is facing a substance use disorder crisis without enough resources for treatment. What will you do to expand treatment options?
- We have seen how policies have had disparate impacts on marginalized communities, particularly communities of color. How will you ensure that future policies do not negatively impact marginalized communities? Will you include an equity impact assessment for all state legislation and projects?

We welcome an opportunity to discuss these issues further with you or members of your campaign. We believe housing is a human right, and we look forward to partnering with you to combat the homelessness crisis. Please contact **XX** at **XX** to discuss further.

Signed,

[statewide organization]

## MUNICIPAL CANDIDATE LETTER

Dear Candidate:

As an organization dedicated to preventing and ending homelessness, **we write to request you to address the issue of homelessness and housing among very low-income people as you campaign for office.** Homelessness is an issue that has reached a crisis level in this country and in our community.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development estimates that in 2018, [Local PIT Count numbers] people were homeless on any given night in [your community], [number of unsheltered in PIT count] of which did not have access to emergency shelter. Throughout the year in the US over 1.5 million people experience homelessness, 8 million households spend more than half their income on rent, and many other households are doubled up with family and friends because they can't afford a place of their own. Everyone in our community is impacted by homelessness, housed and unhoused, and especially vulnerable individuals and families, people with disabilities and other health issues, unaccompanied youth, veterans, and many others.

Homelessness has become an epidemic across this country because of massive disinvestments in affordable housing, stagnant wages, rising housing costs, inaccessible health care, unhealthy food, systemic racism, and countless other policy decisions that have yielded poor outcomes. It is a disgrace that our policymakers have allowed people to live and die on the streets of the wealthiest country in the history of the world when clearly we have the resources for a better standard of living for all those in our communities. As a candidate for office, we ask you to explicitly lay out your plans for how you will address this crisis.

*We thank you for addressing **XX** issue on your website and hope you can further elaborate on....*

### **Homelessness**

- What do you believe to be the major driving factor of homelessness in our community and how do you plan to address it?
- As we work to fix the current broken federal housing and homeless systems, what will you do in the short-term for those who will have no home tonight in our community?
- Many people who are unable to access shelter and find community through encampments. How do you plan to balance public health/safety issues that are sometimes present in encampments with the resident's civil and legal rights? How will you make sure this plan preserve freedoms and dignity for people living in encampments?
- In a growing number of municipalities across the country it is a crime to sleep in public spaces, sit for longer than a few minutes at a time, or engage in many other life-sustaining activities in public. How will you respond to those who want to increase the criminalization of homelessness in our community?
- People living on the streets have limited access to hygiene facilities (i.e. restrooms, showers, laundry) which creates public health concerns, as well as adding to the lack of dignity and stigma of homelessness. How will you ensure that our neighbors have access to safe and clean facilities?

### **Housing**

- As the gap between housing costs and income levels continue to widen, more people are at risk for experiencing homelessness. How do you plan to address our community's severe affordable housing crisis, which disproportionately affects those considered extremely low income?
- How will you leverage or dedicate municipal resources to increase affordable housing?
- What barriers to creating affordable housing will you remove (i.e. zoning, density, or other regulations)
- When low-income housing is proposed, we often see an attitude of "Not In My Backyard" (or NIMBYism). How will you respond to communities who don't want affordable housing and other social service in their community?
- Housing policy has historically been used to segregate and deprive marginalized communities, particularly communities of color. How will you take a more equitable approach to development to address housing disparities?

### **Social Determinants of Health**

- Outside of insurance coverage, people experiencing homelessness face many barriers to good health which include limited access to transportation, healthy food, stable housing, and more. What is your plan to ensure that social determinants of health are recognized and embedded within our health care system and community services?
- People experiencing homelessness combat many barriers to finding and maintaining employment and our [your local minimum wage] minimum wage is not enough to afford a modest apartment in our community. How do you plan to address wages and access to jobs for those who already face many challenges?
- Low-income communities have higher level of stress and mental health concerns. How will you ensure access to mental health services for everyone in the community?
- Our community, like many others, is facing a substance use disorder crisis without enough resources for treatment. What will you do to expand treatment options?
- We have seen how policies have had disparate impacts on marginalized communities, particularly communities of color. How will you ensure that future policies do not negatively impact marginalized communities? Will you include an equity impact assessment for all municipal legislation and projects?

We welcome an opportunity to discuss these issues further with you or members of your campaign. We believe housing is a human right, and we look forward to partnering with you to combat the homelessness crisis. Please contact **XX** at **XX** to discuss further.

Signed,

[local organization]