

National Forum on the Human Right to Housing 2016: Housing Not Handcuffs Campaign

Millions of Americans are homeless, and many more are unstably and poor housed. Even worse, instead of working to ensure access to more housing, cities across the country are increasingly subjecting homeless and poor people—who are disproportionately people of color—to criminal punishment, fines and fees based on this status. Human rights tribunals have decried this criminalization—and homelessness itself-- as a human rights violation. Over the past year, key federal agencies have taken a strong stance against the criminalization of homelessness and, recently, a few local governments have also begun to respond.

This nascent shift in policy is the result of a concerted advocacy by the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty along with many allied groups. At the 2015 Forum, we brought together a diverse group of organizations working on homelessness to begin to lay the groundwork for a campaign to fight against criminalization and for the human right to housing. Currently, over 100 organizations are working on the Campaign, including grass roots groups from around the country, as well as national organizations, many of which had never worked together before.

The 2016 Forum will be a strategic, invitation-only event designed to build on our momentum, broaden our effort, and gather input and strategic advice from key stakeholders and leading national organizations representing a range of constituencies. This is a critical moment for the campaign as we prepare to publically launch it this November. This year's Forum goals are to:

- Assess the recent federal policy changes and their impact in local communities, strategize on advocacy for additional changes and how to ensure ongoing support for them in the next Administration
- Seek input on proposed policies for reform at the federal, state and local level developed by current campaign participants
- Strategize on how to build support for the campaign moving forward from key actors including anti-poverty organizations, civil rights, human rights and criminal justice reform groups, faith community, business leaders, and funders