

IN JUST TIMES

a publication of the

NATIONAL LAW CENTER
ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY



Changing Laws, Changing Lives

July 2018



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Dear Friend,

Courts are an essential line of defense for poor Americans, people of color, immigrants—for all of us. That’s why we are so concerned about the recent Supreme Court nomination. All recent indications show fundamental rights and protections are under attack.

It’s a critical moment. Homeless people are threatened daily with rights violations, including finances, arrests, and incarceration based simply on their housing status, adding grievous insult to already unacceptable injury. People who are at risk—vulnerable tenants, domestic violence survivors, homeless youth (many of whom are LGBTQ), and working men and women living paycheck to paycheck—have too few rights and too many challenges.

Courts can make the crucial difference, as in our case filed against the City of San Diego. There, a federal court judge recently upheld the right of homeless people with disabilities to challenge a city law prohibiting them from living in their vehicles—their sole remaining shelter—under the Americans with Disabilities Act. While the case is not yet over, this preliminary ruling is an important recognition of basic rights—and restraint on the city’s power to violate them.

Protecting this key role of the federal courts is vital. While Judge Brett Kavanaugh serves meals at a shelter for homeless people—and we are glad he does—he has not been proven to



Maria Foscarnis
Executive Director

recognize or protect the legal rights of people who are homeless or at risk. The Law Center is joining with other organizations to [oppose the nomination of Judge Kavanaugh](#) to the Supreme Court.

Regardless of the outcome, count on the Law Center to continue to fight to protect the rights of homeless and poor Americans—and for [laws and policies](#) to give them an opportunity for a better future.

[Your support](#) could mean the difference between someone sleeping in a warm bed, or a cold jail cell. Any contribution is meaningful and appreciated. Thank you!



Maria Foscarinis
Founder & Executive Director

State Index on Youth Homelessness

How does your state treat youth experiencing homelessness? Consult the [2018 State Index on Youth Homelessness](#) to find out. The Law Center is thrilled to partner with Cyndi Lauper's True Colors Fund to create this comprehensive state index, which evaluates the resources and policies each state provides for young people without housing.

The tool ranks each state and the District of Columbia according to 61 metrics in three categories relating to youth homelessness: law & policy, systemic barriers, and environmental challenges. Only 17 states meet more than half the index's criteria.

According to the State Index, while no state does a truly good job, Washington State is one of the better places to be a young person experiencing homelessness. The state does not criminalize youth who run away from home, has banned conversion therapy and has a [strategic plan to end homelessness](#) in place. In contrast, Alabama and South Carolina received the lowest scores. After assigning each state a rating, the State Index provides concrete steps that states can take to protect the safety, health, and dignity of youth.

State Index on Youth Homelessness 2018



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

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Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA): How Ending the Criminalization of Homelessness Can Increase HUD Funding to Your Community

On June 20, the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) issued its annual Notice Of Funding Application (NOFA) for its \$2.2 billion grant stream for Continuums of Care, the public/private collaboratives that provide housing and services to homeless people across the country. For the fourth time since 2015, the funding application offers additional points to communities that document the steps they are taking to combat the criminalization of homelessness. In conjunction with the new application, the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty [published a toolkit](#) which tracks applicants' responses over the first three years the question has been asked. The forthcoming report and [this webinar](#) will show that communities have responded positively to HUD's inclusion of this question on its NOFA by reporting additional activities to discourage criminalization, highlight trends, share a number of emerging model responses, and provide tools for communities looking to do more.

National Forum on the Human Right to Housing

The 2018 National Forum on the Human Right to Housing was characterized by inspiring energy, with over 170 activists, legal advocates and supporters from across the United States in attendance.

Leilani Farha, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Right to Housing, delivered the keynote speech to a packed room. Farha expressed hope that attitudes in the United States would unite to shift away from dehumanizing those without housing. She emphasized the housing is a human right, not a commodity: "The value of housing is home, not equity. Where people, not capital are the primary investment."

The keynote was followed by breakout sessions and discussions spanning the topics of panhandling, renters' rights, and encampments, and youth homelessness. People with lived experience of homelessness, grassroots activists, lawyers, and others worked together to strategize and advance the goals of the Housing Not Handcuffs campaign.

The Law Center thanks all those in attendance who made the Forum possible, as well as sponsors including the Microsoft Corporation, United Airlines, Perkins Coie, Fish & Richardson, and host Sidley Austin.

Fighting Criminalization in Boulder, Colorado

Darren O'Connor, summer legal intern at the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, recently reached out to Boulder County's new District Attorney in Colorado, Michael Dougherty, after a local woman experiencing homelessness was jailed for failing to appear in court when police cited her for charging her phone in downtown Boulder. Boulder police charged Gaya Jenkins with theft under \$50 in July of 2017 for charging her phone at 6:30 in the morning. Upon investigation, Boulder Police Chief reported that nine such tickets had been issued in two years, and Dougherty determined that his office had not prosecuted any of the defendants.

Boulder is not unique, with a [very similar story reported in Portland, Oregon](#). There is a happy ending in Boulder, however, because the D.A. and Chief of Police agreed that Boulder Police Department will no longer issue tickets to people charging cell phones in public. Though the requested records have not yet been released, these types of laws which punish people for life-sustaining activities disproportionately impact and are often unevenly enforced upon people surviving homelessness. In the meantime, news of the change in law went national, and D.A. Dougherty expressed publicly that "[u]nder my administration and leadership, being homeless is not and will not be a crime."

NEWS from the LAW CENTER

Law Center Receives Grant from The Denver Foundation to Address Criminalization of Homelessness

We are proud to announce that the Law Center received a grant from The Denver Foundation to build critical capacity and provide technical assistance and legal support to organizations in the Denver area working to address the criminalization of homelessness.

The Denver Foundation is a community foundation that inspires people and mobilizes resources to improve life in Metro Denver. In 2017, the Foundation and its donors awarded more than \$66 million in grants. The Denver Foundation has three roles: stewarding an endowment to meet current and future needs for Metro Denver, working with community leaders to address the core challenges that face the community and managing more than 1,000

charitable funds on behalf of individuals, families, and businesses. For more information, visit www.denverfoundation.org.

Khadijah Williams Joins Law Center's Board of Directors

The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty is pleased to announce that Khadijah Williams has been appointed to serve on its Board of Directors. As a legislative affairs specialist at the DC Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education, Williams helps initiate discussions on issues affecting homeless children, coordinating with both the DC State Board of Education and the DC Council Committee on Education. After nearly 20 years of living homeless—including in Los Angeles' infamous Skid Row—she was accepted into Harvard University, where she graduated in 2013 with a bachelor's of arts in sociology. Her journey from homelessness to Harvard was featured on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* in 2009,



and she has since completed dozens of interviews and speaking engagements across the country. She's received advocacy awards from School on Wheels, the Union Rescue Mission, and the New York City Department of Education; and her story has been featured in the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Essence Magazine*, and Oprah's *Where Are They Now?*.

"I'm excited to support the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty," said Williams. "The Law Center has enabled me to live successfully by believing in my potential and my inherent power as an advocate. Being on the Board of Directors will allow me to more directly have an impact on helping homeless families both in DC and across the country."

Mid-Year Report: Pro Bono Projects

We're at the mid-year mark of 2018, and the Law Center is already on track to surpass the number of pro bono partnerships we leveraged to amplify our work last year! Currently, the Law Center has 38 pro bono projects in progress, working with 31 law firms and corporate legal departments—and more projects are in the works. In 2017, the Law Center had its most successful pro bono year yet, working with 32 law firms on 59 projects, valued at over \$5.7 million! Special thanks to our Lawyers' Executive Advisory Partners (LEAP) firms that generously donate both pro bono hours and financial support to the Law Center. If your law firm or corporate legal department is interested in becoming a member of LEAP and getting priority access to our best pro bono projects, learn more at nlchp.org/leap or contact Development & Communications Director Maggie Ardiente at mardiente@nlchp.org.

2017 Annual Report

The Law Center's 2017 Annual Report is available now. From court victories to federal policy advocacy, the Law Center had a busy and productive year. The Law Center played a critical role in ensuring access to education for students displaced from the many hurricanes last year, made significant gains in preserving protections for survivors of domestic violence through the Violence Against Women Act, and tirelessly fought for the civil rights of homeless people through the courts. [View the full report.](#)

VAWA Regulations Include Law Center Recommendations

NYC's Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) has [new rules for its lottery application process](#) (effective July 1st) that will support DV survivors with poor credit history. According to HPD, the new guidelines, which will go into effect on July 1, aim to reduce paperwork, make eligibility guidelines clearer, limit the impact that debt and credit history have on an application, and enact more protections for survivors of domestic abuse by establishing that adverse factors—bad credit or inability to pay back debts—cannot be taken into account if the applicant has experienced partner abuse or other domestic violence.

Law Center Contributes to Report on Juvenile Justice and Youth Homelessness

The Coalition for Juvenile Justice released its newest report and four mini-briefs as a part of the “Collaborating for Change: Address Youth Homelessness and Juvenile Justice” project; the Law Center helped draft parts of the report. The mini-briefs provide resources for law enforcement, schools, state and local governments, and State Advisory Groups to understand and address the intersections between juvenile justice and youth homelessness. The longer report, entitled “Implementing Change: Addressing the Intersections of Juvenile Justice and Youth Homelessness for Young Adults” focuses on homelessness among youth ages 18-24 within the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

Recent research from Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago shows that nationally, 1 in 10 young adults, or 3.5 million young people ages 18-25 experience homelessness in a year, 73% for one month or more. Nearly half of young adults who experience homelessness have also been incarcerated in the juvenile or criminal justice system. On a single day, approximately 7,000 youth ages 18-20 are incarcerated or in some type of residential placement in the juvenile justice system. Several states are rethinking the legal classification of these older youth.

2018 Summer Interns

We're pleased to welcome additional interns to the Law Center's [2018 Summer Intern Program](#):

Harry Seavey is a rising senior at Yale University studying international relations. He co-founded Y2Y New Haven, a student group working towards founding New Haven's first major youth homeless shelter, in 2017. Interested in the intersection between social justice and global affairs, he hopes to work abroad after graduation to gain insight into the international approach to ending homelessness.

Alisha Zhao is a sophomore at Stanford University studying political science with a minor in human rights. Originally from Portland, OR, she was appointed by Mayor Hales as the first youth in history to serve on Portland's Human Rights Commission and is the founder and executive director of the non-profit Kids First Project, which brings educational and recreational programs to youth experiencing homelessness. She is passionate about human rights and the many intersections among them, believing in the power of a community to drive social change.

2018-2019 AmeriCorps VISTAs



VISTA

Volunteers in Service to America

Our new team of AmeriCorps VISTAs joined the Law Center in June. They are eager to elevate and advance the Housing Not Handcuffs Campaign in their year of national service!

Dejah Craddock is the development and communications AmeriCorps VISTA. Prior to joining AmeriCorps and the Law Center, Dejah was an intern for the National Park Service (NPS) under the Department of Interior. Dejah focused on record management and responding to FOIA inquiries. Before working with NPS, Dejah earned her Bachelor of Arts in communication and media studies and marketing from Winston Salem State University (WSSU). During her time at WSSU she served as the public relations chair for the Senior Student Council, studied abroad in Kenya, and served with Habitat for Humanity in the Dominican Republic.

Rachel Lee is the networks and events AmeriCorps VISTA. Rachel's work is focused on sustaining and expanding the Housing Not Handcuffs Campaign. Rachel is excited to be a part of the Law Center, which does amazing work that addresses the causes of poverty in impactful and long-lasting ways. Prior to joining AmeriCorps, Rachel graduated from Rice University in Houston, Texas, with a B.A. in history and political science and a minor in sociology. During her time in college, Rachel served as vice president of Rice University's Pre-Law Society and as vice president of Pi Sigma Alpha, the political science honor society.

Nicole Davies is the data management AmeriCorps VISTA. Prior to serving with AmeriCorps, Nicole worked for a nonprofit in Washington, DC, for over ten years. Her work there included program coordinator for a professional development program, associate editor

of an online science review journal, logistical and administrative support for a hands-on summer science program, and data management for various projects and meetings. Before moving to the DC area, she worked for the New York State Assembly for two legislative sessions.

NLCHP in the Media

WTVQ (June 7): [Council to Vote on Giving Free Photo IDs to Homeless](#)

Triad City Beat (June 7): [Citizen Green: Greensboro Stalls for Time on Panhandling Lawsuit](#)

Legal Talk Network (June 12): [2018 Equal Justice Conference: The Criminalization of Poverty](#)

St. Peter Herald (June 12): [Emergency Shelter Advocates Deal With NIMBYism](#)

Real Change (June 13): [Federal Financial Protections Rollback has Unexpected Benefit for Renters](#)

Citylab (June 20): [Criminalizing Homelessness Doesn't Work](#)

The Conversation (June 20): [Why turning homelessness into a crime is cruel and costly](#)

Prescott eNews (June 21): [Everyone Should Have the Opportunity to Live in a Place That's Affordable](#)

Sentinel & Enterprise (June 30): [Lauper LGBTQ Report Ranks States](#)

Arkansas Online (June 30): [Names and Faces](#)

Teen Vogue (July 3): [The True Colors Fund Released a Tool to Help Remedy Youth Homelessness](#)

Windy City Times (July 4): [Lauper, True Colors Release LGBTQ-inclusive Youth Homeless Report](#)

Events

SAVE THE DATE

20th ANNUAL

McKINNEY-VENTO AWARDS RECEPTION

Tuesday, November 13th, 2018
Washington, DC

HONORING

STEWART B. McKINNEY AWARD



Additional awardees and venue to be announced.

For sponsorship opportunities and other information please visit www.nlchp.org/mvawards.

Save the Date! November 13, 2018 - 20th Annual McKinney-Vento Awards

Mark your calendars now and don't miss the Law Center's biggest event of the year! The 20th Annual McKinney-Vento Awards Reception will be held Tuesday, November 13, 2018, from 6:00pm-9:00pm in Washington, D.C. (venue to be announced). We're pleased to announce that year's recipient of the Stewart B. McKinney Award will be healthcare company **Kaiser Permanente**, and more honorees will be announced soon. More information, including sponsorship opportunities, is available at nlchp.org/mvawards.

Changing Laws. Changing Lives.

The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty (the Law Center) is the only national organization dedicated solely to using the power of the law to end and prevent homelessness.

With the support of a large network of pro bono lawyers, we address the immediate and long-term needs of people who are homeless or at risk through outreach and training, advocacy, impact litigation, and public education.

www.nlchp.org