

[Insert local org logo here]

HOUSING NATIONAL LAW CENTER
NOT HANDCUFFS ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Campaign Calls for End to Unconstitutional Ban on Asking for Donations

(August 28, 2018, [city], [state]) – Today [Local Organization], in a letter nationally coordinated by the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, demanded [City] repeal its ban on panhandling. Since the 2015 Supreme Court decision in *Reed v. Town of Gilbert* finding heightened protections for free speech, every case brought against panhandling ordinances—more than 25 to date, including many with language similar to [City]’s—has been found unconstitutional.

“No one wants to see poor people have to beg for money,” said Eric Tars, senior attorney at the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty. “But until all their basic needs—food, health care, and housing—are met, they have the right to ask for help.”

[Insert quote from local panhandler, or use this one: Sue Wells, a currently homeless member of the Homeless Union of Greensboro, North Carolina, explained, "We don't panhandle because we want to. We do it because all of us need to put food in our stomachs. Most of the time, people are just trying to pay rent, or pay a bill or get bus fare."]

Since the 2015 Supreme Court ruling, 100 percent of lawsuits against cities with panhandling bans have been successful in striking down the bans, and at least an additional 31 cities have repealed their ordinances.

[Insert 1-2 sentences with facts about your city’s ban, or humanizing the effects of criminalization e.g. “[City] has had a ban on panhandling since [year],” said [name], [position] at [Local Org]. “We are demanding the city take this unconstitutional law off the books and instead look for more constructive ways to address the needs of our fellow citizens experiencing homelessness and poverty.” (Feel free to come up with your own language).]

The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, together with the National Coalition for the Homeless and more than 100 other organizations, launched the Housing Not Handcuffs Campaign (www.housingnothandcuffs.org) in 2016 to emphasize criminalizing homelessness is the most expensive and least effective way of addressing homelessness. The letter by [Org] today

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is part of a coordinated effort amongst **X** organizations in **Y** states targeting more than **Z** similar outdated ordinances. See nlchp.org/panhandling for more information.

“Punishing homeless people with fines, fees, and arrests simply for asking for help will only prolong their homelessness,” said Maria Foscarinis, executive director at the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty. “Housing and services are the only true solutions to homelessness in our communities.”

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[The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty](http://nlchp.org/panhandling) (the Law Center) is the only national organization dedicated solely to using the power of the law to prevent and end 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. The Housing Not Handcuffs campaign is a project supported by the AmeriCorps VISTA program.

[Insert Local Org description]