**Testimony in Support of H.B. 7033, An Act Prohibiting a Municipality From Imposing**

**a Penalty on Homeless Persons for Undertaking Life-Sustaining Activities on Public Land.**

**Thursday, February 27th, 2025 | Housing Committee**

Good morning, Representative Felipe, Senator Marx, Representative Roberts, Representative Gaston, Representative Scott, Representative Sampson, and distinguished members of the Housing Committee. My name is **[NAME]**, and I am **[POSITION/ORGANIZATION/EXPERIENCE]**, as well as a resident of **[INSERT TOWN/CITY]**. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today in favor of H.B. 7033, An Act Prohibiting a Municipality from Imposing a Penalty on Homeless Persons for Undertaking Life-Sustaining Activities on Public Land.

**PERSONALIZE YOUR TESTIMONY:**

**Please share your personal or professional experience, outlining why municipalities should treat homelessness as a public health issue, rather than arresting, ticketing, or fining people experiencing homelessness.**

**Homelessness is a public health issue, not a crime:**

* Connecticut is experiencing a historic rise in the rate of homelessness. Since 2023, the number of people experiencing homelessness has increased 13%[[1]](#endnote-2) , and of those, 44% were children and adults over 55. Over 5,000 people, including 500 children, are currently experiencing homelessness, and of those, 900 are people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, in tents, outdoors, and places not meant for human habitation [[2]](#endnote-3).
* In addition to the risks to health and safety that people experiencing unsheltered homelessness already face, there is now a risk of ticketing, fines, and even arrests, simply for using public space to rest and take shelter. This makes it harder for people experiencing homelessness to overcome existing challenges and does nothing to increase community safety. It’s also a far more expensive strategy than providing access to stable housing[[3]](#endnote-4).

**Municipalities should not need to arrest, ticket, or fines to address homelessness:**

* 73% of mayors nationwide say that voters hold them accountable for addressing homelessness in their communities, but only 19% believe they have the means to do so[[4]](#endnote-5).
* Penalizing homelessness strains municipal resources, harms community members, and does nothing to address the cause of homelessness. The good news is that there are proven alternatives based in strong partnerships between state, municipal, and community partners.

**Invest in Solutions: Housing Solves Homelessness, and Prevention, Crisis Response and Housing Saves Lives**

* To keep people from becoming homeless in the first place, we should be investing in a statewide approach that prioritizes affordable housing, adequate physical and mental health care, and giving people a living wage.
* If people still need help, the Homeless Response System is designed to assist by preventing homelessness, quickly responding to a housing crisis, and helping people stay sustainably housed in their communities.

The [**CT CAN End Homelessness 2025 Legislative Agenda**](https://cceh.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/2025-Legislative-Agenda.pdf) outlines our [**prevent, respond, and house approach**](https://cceh.org/2024-fact-sheets/) to solving homelessness, through a combination of strong policy solutions and annualized, ongoing funding. Implementing alternatives to ticketing, fines and arrests will ensure that providers and municipalities are working together to prevent and solve homelessness.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to this issue.

Sincerely,

**NAME**

**TITLE**

**ORGANIZATION**

**Areas for Additional Input:**

* **Personal/Professional Insights:**
Include any data, case studies, or personal experiences that further illustrate the need to treat homelessness as a public health issue.
* **Local Context:**
Mention specific challenges or successes in your community related to homelessness and municipal policies.
* **Collaborative Efforts:**
Provide examples of successful partnerships or programs that have helped mitigate homelessness in your area.
1. PIT Count, 2021-23 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. By Name List [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
3. Housing Not Handcuffs: Ending the Criminalization of Homelessness in U.S. Cities, p.36 [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
4. Boston University, 2021 Menin Survey: Mayors and America’s Homelessness Crisis [↑](#endnote-ref-5)