

HOUSING FIRST

NATIONAL LOW INCOME HOUSING COALITION
NATIONAL ALLIANCE TO END HOMELESSNESS
CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES

Threats to Housing First

December 12, 2022

*Moderated by Sarah Saadian, Senior Vice President of
Public Policy and Field Organizing, NLIHC*



Agenda

Opening Remarks & Overview of Threats to Housing First

- Sarah Saadian, NLIHC

Why Housing First Should be Preserved

- Marc Dones, King County Regional Homelessness Authority

Emerging Threats: Kentucky

- George Eklund, Coalition for the Homeless

Local Advocacy: Missouri

- Marqueia Watson, Greater Kansas City Coalition on Homelessness

Impact on People Experiencing Homelessness

- Shams DaBaron, New York City

Take Action & Closing Remarks

- Sarah Saadian, NLIHC



Opening Remarks & Overview of Threats to Housing First

Sarah Saadian

*Senior Vice President of Public Policy &
Field Organizing*

National Low Income Housing Coalition

ssaadian@nlihc.org



What We Learned:



In the first 4-part webinar series, we:

- **Learned why Housing First** is the most effective strategy for ending homelessness, why homelessness is a HOUSING problem, and the long-term solutions.
- **Heard from national experts and advocates** about growing threats to people experiencing homelessness, including legislation promoted by the Cicero Institute.
- **Shared success stories** from Houston, Abilene, Los Angeles, and Washington State.
- **Gained perspective** from people with lived experience.

Cicero Institute Draft Legislation



- **Criminalizes homelessness**, punishable by fines (\$5,000), jail time (1 month), or both, to force people into the state-sanctioned encampments.
- **Redirects investments away from long-term solutions**, like permanent supportive housing, to fund state-sanctioned encampments.
- **Imposes punitive requirements under threat of arrest**, including 6-month time limits for shelters, forced treatment, and sobriety.
- **Bars communities from receiving funding for public safety and homelessness** if they do not enforce anti-camping laws and have a higher-than-state-average of homelessness.
- **Requires police** to serve in homeless outreach teams.

Cicero Institute Legislation



In 2021-2022, bills inspired by the Cicero legislation were introduced in:

- Arizona ([HB 2668](#), [SB 1581](#))
- Georgia ([HB 713/SB 535](#))
- Missouri ([HB 1606](#), [HB 2614](#), [SB 1106](#)) *Passed*
- Oklahoma ([SB 1560](#))
- Tennessee ([HB 978](#)) *Passed*
- Texas ([HB 1925](#)) *Passed*
- Wisconsin ([AB 604](#))

Here's What They Say:



**Joe Lonsdale:
American
Optimist**

Cicero's Harmful Approach



- **Ignores the structural issues** that lead to homelessness and will lead to an increase in homelessness.
- **Is based on outdated models** – models that were ineffective, costly, and dangerous, and make it more difficult for people to exit homelessness.
- **Conflates crime and homelessness**, when people experiencing homelessness are more likely to be victims of crime than perpetrators.
- **Mischaracterizes Housing First** as “Housing Only,” and ignores decades of research, evidence, and learning.
- **Puts forward a false choice**, claiming that their approach is “compassionate,” when true compassion is ending homelessness.

U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) Response



“These policies are ineffective, expensive, and actually worsen the tragedy of homelessness...They put governments at risk of expensive civil-rights lawsuits and distract from implementing programs and strategies that are both effective and cost-effective. Such programs include Permanent Supportive Housing and Housing First, which treat homelessness as a housing and health crisis — not a problem for the criminal justice system to solve.”

– [USICH Executive Director Jeff Olivet, October 2022](#)

Federal Efforts to Undermine Housing First



- **The Housing Promotes Livelihood and Ultimate Success (Housing PLUS) Act ([H.R. 6018](#))**: Directs HUD to set aside 30% of federal homeless assistance funds for programs that require sobriety, treatment, and/or other supportive services as a precondition to housing assistance.
- **[Barr amendment](#) to [H.R.7716](#)**: Would require at least 50% of grant funding to non-Housing First organizations and 50% to other organizations

Here's What They Say:



Countering Barr's False Claims



- **Housing First is not “housing only.”** It includes an array of voluntary supportive services that help individuals live stably in the community.
- **Housing First is more effective.** Emphasizing choice is more effective than requiring services. Learn more [here](#).
- **Housing First can be used to support Recovery Housing.** When recovery housing centers [individual choice](#), Housing First and recovery housing can be complementary, not in conflict.
- **Housing First saves lives!** Getting people experiencing unsheltered homelessness housed is a matter of life and death.

Robert Marbut



- He calls his approach "The Velvet Hammer" and says he "believes in Housing 4th" – awarding permanent housing only after people have met strict behavioral requirements.
- NLIHC strongly rebuked Marbut's appointment, and worked with our national partners and congressional champions to push back on his ineffective and dehumanizing policies, and urged the Biden administration to remove Mr. Marbut from his position.

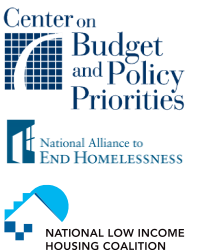
Why Housing First Should be Preserved

Marc Dones

Chief Executive Officer

King County Regional Homelessness Authority

marc@krcha.org



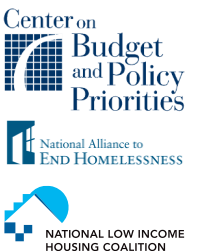
Emerging Threats: Kentucky

George Eklund

Director of Education & Advocacy

Coalition for the Homeless

geklund@louhomeless.org



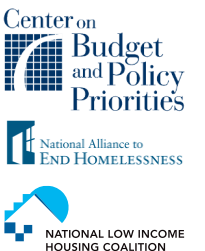
Local Advocacy: Missouri

Marqueia Watson, MSW (she/her)

Executive Director

Greater Kansas City Coalition to End
Homelessness

mwatson@gkcceh.org



CRIMINALIZING HOMELESSNESS:

MISSOURI'S

ANTI CAMPING

LEGISLATION

Presenter: Markeia Watson, MSW | (she/her)

Greater Kansas City Coalition to End Homelessness, Lead Agency for the
MO-604 Jackson County, Missouri/ Wyandotte County, Kansas Continuum of Care



THE **CICERO** INSTITUTE

“The Cicero Institute is a nonpartisan group of policy innovators with deep experience in government, legislating, research, technology, and entrepreneurship. Together, we incubate, develop, and fight for policies that apply the principles of a free society and solve problems at the state level, impacting millions of Americans.” (ciceroinstitute.org)

Research and offerings include:

- **White paper on the failure of Housing First**
- **Commentary on governments "subsidizing addiction"**
- **Boiler plate anti-homelessness legislation for states to adopt**
- **Recommended reforms to help solve the unsheltered homeless problem:**
 1. Redirect homelessness grants into providing cheap available temporary shelter
 2. Redirect public safety grants into the creation of Homeless Outreach Teams and specialty courts for those with drug addictions and mental health issues.
 3. Reform the state's Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) and inpatient admittance criteria for individuals undergoing a mental health crisis
 4. Use state power to clean up encampments on state land and provide superior shelter alternatives



BACKGROUND

- **February 2022-** MO HB2614 Introduced by Rep DeGroot (with support and repeated testimony from Cicero Institute); Few homeless advocates testify
- **March 2022-** Referred to and passes out of Judiciary Committee
- **March- May 2022-** Homeless advocates hold several meetings with legislators and Judge Glock of the Cicero Institute to discuss concerns with the bill as written
- **May 2022-** Bill “disappears” and is tacked onto MO HB1606 as an amendment and passes out of both houses. 1606’s title states it is enacting “fifty new sections relating to political subdivisions”
- **June 29, 2022-** HB1606 Signed into law by Gov. Mike Parsons, one day before the deadline
- **January 1, 2023-** Law goes into effect

BILL SUMMARY

MO HB 2614/1606 Language

No person shall be permitted to use state-owned lands for unauthorized sleeping, camping, or long-term shelters. Any violation shall be a **Class C misdemeanor**

State funds for homelessness shall be used for **parking areas**, camping facilities, and **short-term shelters**.

State funds otherwise used for permanent housing projects shall be used to assist individuals with (mandated) **substance use, mental health treatment**, and other services like **short-term housing**.

Homelessness assistance funding will not be allocated to any political subdivision or not-for-profit organization in any city that shows an increase in unsheltered homeless individuals

Any political subdivision with a higher per-capita rate of homelessness than the state average that **refuses to enforce ordinances** prohibiting unauthorized camping **shall receive no further state funding** until the political subdivision has a per-capita rate of unsheltered homeless individuals at or below the state average; or ordinances prohibiting unauthorized camping are enforced

LOCAL **ADVOCACY**



- **Pleas made to state legislators warning bill is harmful**
- **Engaged National Alliance to End Homelessness**
- **Presented legislation to Kansas City's Attorney for review**
- **Formed NAEH-led convening of nationwide advocacy group: MO, TX, GA, AZ, and TN**
- **Lawsuits- Housing justice advocates suing the state of Missouri alleging HB1606 is unconstitutional**
- **Continued discussions with Cicero and state legislators**
- **Planning and communication with local law enforcement**
- **Street outreach and education**

WHERE WE ARE **NOW**



- **National advocacy group: repeal and litigation strategies**
- **Local implementation and enforcement**
- **Stalled introduction to City Council of Houseless Bill of Rights**
- **Encampment strategy**
- **Negotiation with Kansas side of COC**
- **Negative consequences for staff- morale, burnout**

THANK YOU!

Marqueia Watson, MSW| she/her

Executive Director

Greater Kansas City Coalition to End Homelessness

mwatson@gkcceh.org



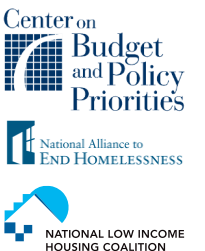
Impact on People Experiencing Homelessness

Shams DaBaron

Homeless Advocate

New York City

dahomelesshero@gmail.com



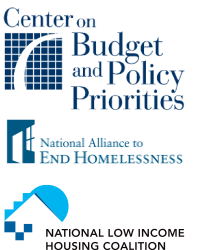
Take Action & Closing Remarks

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Take Action!



Use our [Advocacy Toolkit](#) to:

1. **Schedule meetings with elected officials.** Use our [meeting request template](#) and [tips for planning](#) in-district meetings.
2. **Invite elected officials to tour an affordable housing development, or a Housing First program.** Read more about [how to plan](#) an effective site visit or tour.
3. **Amplify on social media key messages about America's housing and homelessness crisis and long-term solutions.** Use our sample [social media messages](#).
4. **Share stories of those directly impacted by homelessness and housing instability.** Learn more about [how to tell compelling stories](#).

Talking Points



- **What are the major causes of America's housing and homelessness crisis?**
- **Why is homelessness increasing in some communities?**
- **What is Housing First?**
- **Why are some elected officials turning to misguided and harmful measures?**
- **What are the long-term solutions needed to end America's homelessness and housing crisis?**

Housing First Resources



- [State and Congressional District Profiles](#)
- [Factsheets on Housing First](#)
 - Why Housing First is a [critical strategy](#) for ending homelessness.
 - [Research](#) on the effectiveness of Housing First.
 - How Housing First [cut veteran homelessness](#) in half.
 - How Housing First [supports recovery](#) from substance use disorders
 - How Housing First supports people with [mental health conditions](#)
 - [Key facts](#) about Housing First
 - [Q&A](#) on Housing First
 - [Responding to Unsheltered Homelessness](#)
- [Talking Points to Oppose the Cicero-Backed Legislation](#)
- [Talking Points to Oppose the Housing PLUS Act](#)

Resources

Next Webinar: “A World Without Housing First”

Monday, January 9 from 2:30-4:00 pm ET

Register at: <https://bit.ly/3XJFKoe>

Learn more about Housing First: <https://bit.ly/3vHf8YR>

Advocacy Toolkit: <https://bit.ly/3Vy0ko6>

