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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CDC: Housing, Not Handcuffs Is the Way to Stop COVID-19 Amongst Homeless Populations**

***Advocates Hail First Step, Call for More Help***

(DATE, 2020, [city], [state]) – Today, [Local Organization(s)], in a letter nationally coordinated by the [National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty](https://nlchp.org/panhandling/), demanded [City] follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) official [guidance](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/unsheltered-homelessness.html) stating, “Unless individual housing units are available, do not clear encampments during community spread of COVID-19.”

[Local Organization(s)], the Law Center, and other [Housing Not Handcuffs](http://housingnothandcuffs.org/) Campaign members agree with the outlined recommendations and are grateful that the CDC has laid out actions that will help, not harm, people experiencing homelessness. Now, we call on [City] to immediately stop [arresting unhoused people for resting and sheltering in public space and conducting sweeps of homeless encampments (and other local practices if any)] to comply with these guidelines. The federal CARES Act devotes $4 billion for homeless Emergency Service Grants, $5 billion for Community Development Block Grants, and $150 billion for general community relief funds, all of which could be used for hotel rooms for people experiencing homelessness, and all of which allow any expense incurred since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis to be reimbursed.

“We thank the CDC for emphasizing that from a public health perspective, stopping sweeps of homeless encampments and providing housing, or at least sanitation for encampments, is a necessary immediate step in addressing the COVID-19 crisis,” said Maria Foscarinis, Executive Director at the Law Center. “Now that the federal government has enacted the CARES Act, local governments have the funding to do what is right for their communities—there are no more excuses.”

[Insert 1-2 sentences with facts about your city’s sweeps or criminalization ordinances, with a quote about the harm caused, e.g. “We have been calling on [City] to cease the inhumane, ineffective, and expensive enforcement of such arcane laws,” said [name], [position] at [Local Org]. “But now, if our city does not follow the recommendations of public health officials and the CDC, this is a life or death situation that cannot be ignored.” (Feel free to come up with your own language).]

“This isn’t just about people experiencing homelessness,” emphasized Eric Tars, Legal Director at the Law Center. “People experiencing homelessness are two to four times more likely to need intensive care if they become infected with COVID-19, so if you don’t want a homeless individual in that ICU bed when your grandmother needs it, you need to make sure they have a hotel bed *now* so they have the best chance of staying healthy.”

The CDC Guidance is available here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/unsheltered-homelessness.html>.

The Law Center’s recommendations for protecting and serving people experiencing people experiencing homelessness during this crisis, as well as other best practices from across the country, are available here: <https://nlchp.org/coronavirus/>.

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*The* [*National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty*](http://www.nlchp.org/) *(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.*

[Insert organization statement]