

NATIONAL LAW CENTER ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY

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From Wrongs to Rights

The Case for Homeless Bills of Rights Legislation

Washington DC - Homeless bills of rights, a new and powerful legislative tool for protecting the rights of homeless Americans, are gaining in popularity across the nation, according to a new [report](#) from the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty (“Law Center”).

Homeless bills of rights have already been enacted in Rhode Island, Connecticut, Illinois, and the United States territory of Puerto Rico, and legislation has been proposed in several other states across the country. “These laws are rapidly gaining in popularity across the country because civil rights advocates recognize their potential to provide homeless people with protection from common rights violations,” states Tristia Bauman, Housing Program Director at the Law Center.

These bills not only protect against common forms of discrimination, they can also help people experiencing homelessness realize those rights that most of society takes for granted, such as the right to freely use public spaces and the right to equal treatment from government agencies. They also prohibit discrimination against homeless people in housing, employment and public benefits. “Homeless bills of rights can provide very practical tools that help people out of homelessness and into self-sufficiency,” said Maria Foscarinis, Executive Director of the Law Center. “They can also lay a legal foundation to end homelessness by recognizing that housing is an essential human right.”

The report, [From Wrongs to Rights: The Case for Homeless Bills of Rights Legislation](#), describes the need for homeless bills of rights and offers insight into the distinct legislative models that have emerged. The report, co-authored by Professor Sara Rankin of Seattle University School of Law, provides tips to civil rights supporters interested in seeing these laws passed in their own states, drawing upon the experiences of advocates who have led the way.

The Law Center will also host a webinar discussing the report and other homeless bills of rights issues today at 11am PST/2pm EST. Presenters will include Tristia Bauman, Housing Program Director at the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, Professor Sara Rankin of Seattle University School of Law, and Paul Boden, Executive and Organizing Director at Western Regional Advocacy Project. To register for the webinar, [click here](#).

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The National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty is the only national organization providing high-level, comprehensive legal and legislative expertise resolving national homelessness issues through advocacy, advocacy training, public education, and impact litigation.