

NATIONAL LAW CENTER ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY

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Barr's Nomination for Attorney General Raises Concerns for Homeless Advocates

(December 19, 2018, Washington, DC) – **Maria Foscarinis, executive director of the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty**, issued the following statement in response to President Trump's nomination of William Barr to be United States Attorney General:

As the nation's top law enforcement agency, the Department of Justice is responsible for protecting the civil and human rights of all people in this country—including people experiencing homelessness. William Barr's record calls into question his commitment to doing so, and indicates instead support for policies that contribute to and perpetuate homelessness. We at the [National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty](#) join our partners at the [Leadership Conference for Civil and Human Rights](#) in calling on the Senate to fully vet his nomination.

As Attorney General under George H.W. Bush, Barr pursued harsh criminal justice policies that furthered mass incarceration by supporting lengthy mandatory minimum sentences for drug possession. Contrary to public perception, most homeless persons are not addicted to drugs, but those who are do not need punishment—they need treatment, and housing to ensure their treatment can be successful. [Studies](#) show it costs two to three times less to provide housing and supportive services in the community than it is to house these persons with inadequate treatment behind prison walls. The recent bipartisan consensus on the First Step Act shows our country is moving beyond a mass incarceration approach—Senators should ensure our nation's top law enforcement officer is moving consistent with the times.

Barr has also called support groups for LGBTQ students “immoral” and has advocated against interpreting federal laws to include gender identity, a position at odds with the holdings of many federal courts. More than 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ, often forced out of their homes due to prejudice. Once on the streets, these youth are often excluded from religious shelters and unwelcome at others, which makes them more vulnerable to trafficking. Federal leadership that seeks to further enshrine discrimination against LGBTQ individuals in law and policy will only further marginalize these youth and make them more vulnerable.

The Senate has an important role to play and should only confirm an Attorney General nominee who is committed to upholding the civil and human rights of all people. We call on all Senators to fully vet William Barr to ensure he meets that standard.

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[The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty](#) (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.