

# California Governor's Politically Expedient Order to Demolish Homeless Encampments Ignores Evidence of Ineffectiveness

The shortsighted executive order will cause further harm and trauma to thousands while resulting in no sustainable improvement in homelessness.

July 26, 2024 | New York, NY – Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) joins California-based homelessness and housing organizations condemning Governor Newsom's executive order calling for state officials to begin demolishing homeless encampments that will lead to forcefully removing people and their belongings, as well as ticketing or arresting people experiencing homelessness.

The Governor's order follows the U.S. Supreme Court's ideology-driven ruling on *Grants Pass v. Johnson* last month that reversed constitutional protections for people experiencing homelessness and emboldened jurisdictions seeking to criminalize homelessness.

The Governor's order represents a dangerous and rapid shift in this country moving away from proven, affordable housing and supportive services solutions and back to regressive, punitive-driven, costly, and discriminatory approaches that were tried before but failed.

“This order won't reduce homelessness or deter encampments. It will ‘re-displace’ those already displaced from affordable housing opportunities,” said Sharon Rapport, California State Director at CSH. “What works is ongoing funding for housing with evidence-based services. What doesn't work is giving people 48 hours to move out, which is traumatizing, stigmatizing, and creates more barriers to rehousing.”

CSH and organizational partners call on the Governor and state officials to acknowledge that the order will disproportionately affect Black, Indigenous and People of Color, perpetuating racism and systemic inequalities such as poverty, discrimination in housing, employment, and education. The Statewide Homeless Assessment reported stark racial disparities among unsheltered homelessness in California: The proportion of Black individuals in the PIT Count was 5.3 times higher than their proportion in the state's total population. Indigenous people experiencing homelessness were represented at a rate 5.0 times higher than their share of

the overall population, and Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders experiencing homelessness were represented at a rate 2.8 times higher than their share of the population.

Further, the executive order blatantly ignores compelling, independent research, including a recent analysis of Los Angeles practices and a RAND report, proving that a punitive approach to homelessness like clearing encampments is ineffective and temporary, disproportionately harms people of color, people with mental illness, older adults, and people who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. These practices lead to service providers losing contact with their clients, people losing their identification and other documentation needed to move into

housing, driving people further into poverty, erecting barriers to housing, and few people who want shelter able to access it.

CSH and partners urge the Governor and his administration to reverse the executive order and focus on a better way forward based on data-driven, equitable, and fiscally responsible solutions, including the necessary investments identified in the California Homeless Housing Needs Assessment. These include:

- Working in coordination with—rather than competition with—local governments to ensure people receive evidence-based approaches to assisting people in encampments to move into permanent housing,
- Accelerating new affordable housing development and repair and preserve existing supportive and public housing,
- Mobilizing public health teams,
- Engaging people living in encampments and connecting individuals to housing and supportive services, and
- Leveraging insights from those with lived experiences of homelessness. Such approaches uphold individual dignity, improve community outcomes, and enhance public safety.

“CSH and partners acknowledge the Newsom’s Administration’s unprecedented investment in housing and homelessness programs. We look forward to working with the Administration to achieving the level of funding identified in the California Homeless Housing Need Assessment of 2.7% of the state’s budget,” added Rapport.

#### ADDITIONAL QUOTES INCLUDING FROM CSH PARTNERS

“Jurisdictions that conduct encampment sweeps without ensuring affordable housing and necessary services will fail to address homelessness,” said Deborah De Santis, President and CEO at CSH. “Instead, we can choose a path to lasting change, where everyone has a chance to secure a home. By investing in effective solutions, we can create sustainable, respectful communities, reduce taxpayer burdens, and ensure dignity for all.”