

THE UNHOUSED BILL OF RIGHTS



UNHOUSED BILL OF RIGHTS Congresswoman Cori Bush (MO-01)

The unhoused crisis in America is an urgent, life-threatening public health emergency.

The inability of the richest country in the world to guarantee housing, universal medical care, and livable wages to its people represents a moral and political failure at every level of our society. Lawmakers at every level of government, especially the federal government, must take swift action to end the unhoused crisis and immediately provide desperately needed resources to unhoused persons, communities, advocates, and service providers.

The Unhoused Bill of Rights (UBR) is the first federal resolution to **declare unalienable rights for unhoused persons and provide solutions to permanently end the crisis by 2027**. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, this resolution illustrates the interconnectedness of the unhoused and public health crises.

The UBR demonstrates the complexity of issues faced by unhoused persons, particularly as it relates to their criminalization, discrimination, dehumanization, and mistreatment by law enforcement, private businesses, and housed persons. From a health-based, equity approach developed in coordination with community-led organizations and unhoused advocates, this resolution calls on the federal government to:

- **Permanently end the unhoused crisis by 2027** by drastically increasing the affordable housing stock, providing universal housing vouchers, and bolstering funding to federal housing programs, shelters, transitional and permanent housing programs, social services, and permanent emergency rental assistance;
- Calls on the Department of Health and Human Services **to declare the unhoused crisis a public health emergency**;
- Protect unhoused individuals from the **violation of their fundamental civil and human rights** to housing, health care, livable wages, education, employment

opportunities, access to public facilities, and freedom from harassment by law enforcement, private businesses, property owners, and housed residents;

- Supports **historic federal funding levels for** state and local governments to provide 24-hour support for unhoused people, including: shelters, transitional housing programs, supportive services, public restrooms, hand-washing stations, showers, laundry facilities, and water fountains in coordination with grassroots and community-led organizations;
- **Develop holistic, health-based, and non-carceral solutions to the unhoused crisis** in coordination with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), community-led organizations, and unhoused advocates from a health-based approach that **addresses both the unhoused and public health crises.**

The Unhoused Bill of Rights provides a framework for concrete steps the federal government must take to permanently house the nearly 1.5 million women, children, veterans, and people struggling to survive on the streets. Lawmakers must champion policies that allow people to remain in their homes and guarantee housing for everyone.

The unhoused crisis continues to ravage communities, claim lives, render people permanently disabled, funnel people through the criminal-legal system, and create barriers to employment, education, civic participation, and overall happiness. Maintaining poverty and homelessness is a policy choice. We must stand together as lawmakers, advocates, and impacted people to make the right choice to end the unhoused crisis once and for all.

The Unhoused Bill of Rights is one step in a long journey toward justice for the members of our unhoused community.