

A Homeless Bill of Rights



Organizations Commemorate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with Western Days of Action in Support of Campaign Protecting the Civil Rights of Homeless People

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In the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the weekend commemorating his contributions to the Civil Rights movement, members of the Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP) are holding days of action in support of the civil and human rights of homeless people.

WRAP's days of action will highlight and push for the passage of our Right to Rest Act, which would help end the criminalization and incarceration of unhoused individuals and families. The proposed state legislation is a response to the growing trend of cities creating laws that make it illegal to sit, sleep, stand, and share food in public space.

"We raise our voices this week to honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and continue his work in fighting for the civil rights of the most marginalized in our society," said Ibrahim Mubarak of Portland's Right 2 Survive, one of the 180 organizations working actively on the Homeless Bill of Rights Campaign (HBRC). "With shelters filled to capacity and thousands of people on waiting lists for housing around the state, homeless people have no choice but to live in public space. Cities cannot continue to act as if arresting people for that is going to solve the problem."

Over the past couple of years we have documented 1,527 homeless people's interactions with local police, private security guards, and the criminal justice system in 17 cities in 8 states. All respondents participated in the surveys for the opportunity to speak "unfiltered" to the broader community about ***what is really happening on our nation's streets to poor, disabled, and homeless community members.***

More than three-quarters of survey respondents (81%) reported being harassed, cited or arrested by police officers for sleeping outside, (76%) reported the same for sitting or lying down and (74%) for loitering or simply "hanging out." These were far and away the top crimes for which homeless people were charged. A sad corresponding fact is that only one quarter of respondents (25%) believed that they knew of safe, legal places to sleep.

WRAP continues its fight to protect these civil rights for all. Rhode Island, Illinois and Connecticut have all passed Homeless Bill of Rights laws in recent years. Representatives in both the Colorado and California state legislature are expected to introduce Right to Rest legislation in the coming weeks.

WRAP's Right to Rest Days of Action are taking place in San Francisco, Denver, Portland, Los Angeles, Sacramento, Chico and several other cities. WRAP's actions stand in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement and all other groups fighting unjust, violent law enforcement.

"Policymakers and elected officials can no longer use the police, discriminatory laws, and unjust enforcement as solutions to the problems that pervade our communities," said Paul Boden of the

Western Regional Advocacy Project. "They cannot ignore the calls for justice emanating from communities across the country."

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