

Criminalization of Homelessness Action Alert

This week [SB 285](#) passed out of the Judiciary Committee by an 8-2 vote. The bill would:

- make Hoosiers sleeping outside guilty of a Class C misdemeanor and subject to arrest and incarceration.
- Allow the State Attorney General, private citizens, and businesses to sue cities and towns for perceived insufficient enforcement of the bill.
- While the bill nominally supports diversion programs and service referrals in lieu of arrest, it provides NO actual resources to these service providers to allow them to do their work.

ACTION ITEM: Please contact [your state senator](#) and urge them to vote no on SB 285! Here are some key points to share:

This legislation would increase the vulnerability and harms experienced by victims of domestic violence. Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness for women and children in Indiana. They are pushed out of housing to escape violence and trauma, then insufficient public investment in housing and supportive services prolongs their experiences of homelessness.

- Indiana lacks sufficient emergency domestic violence shelter beds and resources to house every individual fleeing.
- 99% of domestic violence victims experience economic abuse—their resulting experiences of poverty and poor credit histories make it very difficult for survivors to find safe and affordable housing.
- Additionally, there are only 38 affordable and available units for every 100 extremely low-income households and the economic abuse that most survivors experience often puts them in this extremely low-income household category.
- Criminalizing homelessness only exacerbates the problem, making it difficult for individuals to obtain safe and affordable housing when they have a criminal record. We are in a housing crisis and housing is the number one need for survivors. Criminalizing homelessness only increases survivors' risks of violence, trauma, and further housing insecurity.
- Faced with these choices, many survivors will be forced to return to a violent home.

Criminalizing homelessness doesn't address the problem--Legislation like this has been tried in cities around the country, and it has not reduced unsheltered homelessness; it has only made it harder for people facing homelessness to access services and employment. Supportive housing, shelter services, and stabilizing assistance are not just more humane and dignified, they are also more cost-effective than incarceration.