

NATIONAL
HEALTH CARE
for the
HOMELESS
COUNCIL

Standing in Solidarity: In Support of the Movement for Social Justice

The National Health Care for the Homeless Council recognizes that the significant health disparities associated with homelessness are part of a much larger pattern of injustice in the United States. Poverty and structural racism too often are perpetuated and upheld by poor public policies and narrow social opinion, leaving millions of men, women, children, and youth unable to achieve their potential for well-being and success. We stand in solidarity with the growing social movements and supportive jurisdictions that seek to correct underlying social and economic inequities. We understand that our work as health care providers is part of a much larger struggle to attain human and civil rights, to include the rights to housing and health care.

Numerous recent events involving police violence and community responses have reawakened the national consciousness around the failures of our public systems. Rather than focusing on sensationalized moments and ignoring the daily traumatic violence experienced by those living in poverty, we ask that media outlets instead continue to highlight the root causes of these incidents—social disinvestment, racism, and the ongoing, profound inequities in opportunities, as evidenced by the following:

- **Health Care:** While the Affordable Care Act has expanded access to health care for many, it will [still leave 27 million people uninsured](#) and at risk of financial ruin and homelessness following illness or injury. [High co-pays and deductibles leave 31 million more underinsured](#) and unable to afford treatment.
- **Housing:** Following a troubling legacy of racial segregation in housing policy and significant federal disinvestment in public and subsidized housing, hundreds of thousands of Americans sleep in emergency shelters or on the streets. On one January night in 2014, [at least 578,424 people slept outside or in an emergency shelter or transitional housing program](#). Additionally, more than [one-third of U.S. households spent more than 30% of their income on housing](#) and are at risk of homelessness.
- **Income:** [Average hourly wages have remained stagnant since the mid-1960s](#). Approximately [45 million people—one in six Americans—live at or below the federal poverty level](#) while [10% of the wealthiest households hold 85% of the nation's wealth, leaving the lowest 50% of households with less than 1%](#).
- **Incarceration:** The U.S. has the highest rate of incarceration in the world, disproportionately among people of color commonly convicted of nonviolent drug offenses. [In 2013, nearly 7 million people were in the adult correctional system](#) (4 million on probation, 1.5 million in prison, 850,000 on parole, and 731,000 in jails). People without homes are routinely criminalized for sleeping or sitting in public spaces, as are people struggling with mental illness and addictions. This leaves millions with criminal records that often preclude employment and housing.

Public policies created current conditions, but the policy-making process can also promote a robust and inclusive society. We call for measures to establish for everyone in our country the rights to health care, housing, and livable incomes. We also call for those in the Health Care for the Homeless community—and others allied with this cause—to continue our work toward public policies that achieve social justice.