

HOUSING NOT HANDCUFFS

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

Submitted by The National Homelessness Law Center

DOGE Subcommittee

Sept. 15, 2026

We write today as a coalition of organizations that are deeply concerned about our country's growing homelessness crisis. [Federal homelessness data](#) shows that more than 745,000 people experienced homelessness on a given night in 2025 and that, since 2019, homelessness has increased in every state.

During today's hearing, subcommittee members will hear from individuals who purport to share our belief in the need to address this urgent crisis. However, we expect their testimony to be premised on deeply harmful misconceptions about homelessness. We submit this statement to ensure that subcommittee members receive accurate information about the causes of and solutions to homelessness.

Americans are living through a profound affordability crisis, pushing more and more people into homelessness

According to the most recent data, [nearly half of all renters](#) spend more than a third of their income on housing. When an individual or family puts such a significant portion of their income directly towards housing, one missed paycheck or monthly rent increase can become a housing crisis. Every time rents go up by \$100, [homelessness increases by 9%](#). Homelessness is clearly a housing issue.

Housing and supportive services solve homelessness

Fortunately, we know what works long term. Decades of rigorous studies have continually shown that the Housing First approach – rooted in providing housing alongside supportive services, such as healthcare or job training – significantly decreases homelessness. One study, for example, found that this approach decreased homelessness by [nearly 90%](#). Its success is also clear in the decline of veteran homelessness. Because of robust federal funding for housing and supportive services for veterans, veteran homelessness has decreased by more than [50% since 2010](#).

Providing housing and supportive services for people experiencing homelessness [benefits everyone](#). Individuals and families experience better health, greater stability, and stronger connections to service providers. With the stability of housing, people are more able to participate in work, family life, and in their community. And the entire community benefits due to the decreased tax burden caused by high hospital utilization rates, and healthier and safer communities that can only be realized when everybody has a safe place to live.

It's basic math: the demand for services rapidly outpaces the supply

We anticipate that the individuals speaking in today's committee hearing will try to blame hard-working, underpaid homeless service providers for rising homelessness. However, we

know that service providers across the country are doing incredible work to help their clients access housing and services. But with shoestring budgets, they simply cannot keep up with the number of people being pushed into homelessness by rising housing costs. [In California](#), for example, service providers worked hard to house a massive 43,760 people. At the same time, 127,182 people became homeless, many for the first time. Modest increases in federal funding for homelessness are [simply not sufficient](#) to meet this growing need.

On top of this, the people doing life-saving work to end homelessness in local communities are severely [overburdened and underpaid](#). Most employees in the homelessness workforce [cannot even afford their own housing](#). We should work to ensure these workers, like our teachers, firefighters, and other public servants, receive a living wage, not blame them for faults in systems entirely outside their control.

Congress should increase funding for real solutions to homelessness

The fact that far too many people sleep outside in this country every night is the result of decades of housing policies that have put housing out of reach – and not the work of homeless service providers or the people who experience homelessness themselves. We can and should expect our public systems to use resources responsibly, but we must simultaneously recognize that people need housing, health care, safety, and connection to their communities. To ensure these basic needs are met, Congress should fund the homelessness system at scale, investing in the housing and supportive services proven to prevent and end homelessness.



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