

Dear Mayor Brandon Johnson,

As high school students in Chicago, we urge our city officials to protect and defend the human rights of our unhoused neighbors. Our city appears to be doing better than other major U.S. cities when it comes to protecting unhoused populations, but there is more we can still do to uphold the human right to adequate housing in our community.

In December 2024, the Chicago Coalition to End Homelessness (CCH) released its annual report showing that roughly 76,375 people experienced homelessness in Chicago in 2022, a 10.4% one-year increase. Since August 2022, the City of Chicago has welcomed over 46,000 new arrivals seeking asylum. That number continues to grow daily. These new neighbors are not reflected in CCH's annual estimate.

Additionally, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) identified 26,800 students experiencing homelessness during the 2023-24 school year, which comprised of 8.29% of the total CPS student population. Other CPS data showed that 1,030 students were "unaccompanied youth," defined as students who are homeless and living on their own, without a parent or guardian.

The State of Illinois' Bill of Rights for the Homeless Act is a good start to protecting the human rights of the unhoused. We hope you will support the passing of House Bill (HB) 1429, which amends the Bill of Rights of the Homeless Act by "prohibit[ing] the State or a unit of local government from creating or enforcing policies or ordinances imposing fines or criminal penalties against people experiencing unsheltered homelessness for occupying or engaging in life-sustaining activities on public property."

Protecting our unhoused community members includes humanizing our approach to this crisis and ensuring human rights are maintained regardless of housing status. It is a moral and societal obligation for the City of Chicago to implement constructive and compassionate solutions that focus on keeping people in their homes, preserving existing affordable housing, and helping already unhoused people get into housing this is permanent, stable, affordable, and meets all the criteria of their human right to housing.

Please, stand with us in demanding justice and fairness for our unhoused neighbors. We have signed this petition to show our support for HB 1429 and the passing of other state and federal laws prohibiting criminalization of unhouse people.

Sincerely,

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