

Dear Manhattan Beach City Council,

As high school students in Manhattan Beach, CA, we urge our city officials to end the criminalization of our unhoused neighbors. The criminalization of unhoused people is a widespread issue across the United States, where laws and policies disproportionately target individuals experiencing houselessness. And at least 3,992 are unsheltered and living on our streets in the LAHSA Service Planning Area 8, which includes Manhattan Beach, according to the 2024 Point In Time Count.

Criminalization of unhoused people is cruel. It punishes them for poverty and lacking housing. It results in incarceration and destruction of their property. It makes it harder for them to secure employment and housing. Channeling resources towards punitive measures is an economic burden for Manhattan Beach’s taxpayers, is ineffective at tackling the core issue of houselessness, and diverts from real solutions, especially permanent housing.

Here in Manhattan Beach, laws like sections 4.140.030 and 4.140.040 of the Manhattan Beach Municipal Code (MBMC) directly target and criminalize unhoused people, making their survival even harder. We need legislation that protects, rather than punishes, members of our community. We demand the repeal of MBMC sections 4.140.030 and 4.140.040.

We also urge you to support passage of state and federal laws to protect our unhoused neighbors from punitive local laws and policies that effectively criminalize their houselessness. If there are state and federal laws against criminalization, then surrounding cities can’t aggressively criminalize and force their unhoused people into the city of Manhattan Beach.

It's not just about decriminalizing houselessness—it’s about humanizing our approach to this crisis and ensuring human rights are maintained regardless of housing status. It is a moral and societal obligation for Manhattan Beach 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 the repeal of sections 4.140.030 and 4.140.040 and the passing of passing of state and federal laws prohibiting criminalization of unhouse people.

Sincerely,

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