

Dear Santa Monica City Council Members,

As high school students in Santa Monica, 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.

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 Santa Monica taxpayers, is ineffective at tackling the core issue of houselessness, and diverts from real solutions, especially permanent housing.

In 2023, nearly 67% of combined Santa Monica Police Department arrests and citations targeted unhoused individuals, mainly for low-level crimes linked to living and survival conditions. Laws like sections 4.08.095 and 4.08.097 of the Santa Monica Municipal Code (SMMC) 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 SMMC sections 4.08.095 and 4.08.097. 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 Santa Monica.

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 the City of Santa Monica to implement constructive and compassionate solutions that focus on helping already unhoused people get into housing that 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 SMMC sections 4.08.095 and 4.08.097 and the passing of state and federal laws prohibiting criminalization of unhouse people.

Sincerely,

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