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# STREET SHEET



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D5 SUPERVISOR WANTS A  
SHELTER IN EACH DISTRICT, BUT  
WHERE’S THE HOUSING?

JORDAN WASILEWSKI

I am no fan of my new supervisor, Bilal Mahmood, whom I think cares more for his wealthier constituents in his district than Tenderloin residents. He just proposed legislation that affirms my viewpoint.

In May, he introduced an ordinance that would require the City to approve new health and homeless facilities in each supervisorial district by June 30, 2026. Those facilities would include new homeless shelters, transitional housing facilities, behavioral health residential care and treatment facilities, and behavioral health specialized outpatient clinics.

At least I can support the creation of behavioral health facilities. I also believe strongly in geographic equity in health care services. In light of the passage of Donald Trump’s “big ugly bill” that will destroy health care services across the country, we definitely need equity in low-income clinics—though I’d prefer Medicare For All, but that’s a whole ‘nother story.

However, what’s missing from Mahmood’s plan is permanent supportive housing. I’ve previously written about how the City’s permanent supportive housing is concentrated in specific neighborhoods, particularly SROs in the Mission, Tenderloin, South of Market and Chinatown, among others. While there has been some progress, such as a tourist motel in Crocker-Amazon being converted to PSH, the City still continues to rely on fixed-site permanent supportive housing on the eastern side of town.

Lately, media coverage has focused on people’s complaints about a few individuals who decompensate and engage in antisocial behaviors. Despite these horror stories, many

success stories go unpublicized. What’s surprising about the legislation is that it has support from moderates and progressives on the board alike. Democratic socialist Jackie Fielder of District 9 and progressive

Shamann Walton of District 10 have signed on as cosponsors. I am disappointed that they are not pushing for the inclusion of permanent supportive housing.

A similar coalition between mods and progs on the San Francisco Democratic County Central Committee supported a resolution endorsing Mahmood’s ordinance. John Avalos, a progressive who served on the board, joined Mahmood and District 6 Supervisor Matt Dorsey as a cosponsor.

As much as the City needs geographic equity in its homelessness response system, permanent supportive housing should be a cornerstone. If permanent supportive housing expansion is prioritized over shelter, then shelter beds will turn over quicker. But if shelter becomes the priority, then shelter becomes the permanent, more expensive, and less humane solution. I also think progressives should dare to push back against the anti-PSH rhetoric, especially that coming from recovery grifters.

I believe that, as someone who supported Dean Preston until the bitter end, maybe progressives need to go into the wilderness for a hard reset, as they have not tried to win over disillusioned people. Perhaps they can remedy that by including permanent supportive housing in this legislation. It’s only right.

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COALITION ON  
HOMELESSNESS

The STREET SHEET is a project of the Coalition on Homelessness. The Coalition on Homelessness organizes poor and homeless people to create permanent solutions to poverty while protecting the civil and human rights of those forced to remain on the streets.

Our organizing is based on extensive peer outreach, and the information gathered directly drives the Coalition’s work. We do not bring our agenda to poor and homeless people: they bring their agendas to us.

STREET  
SHEET  
STAFF

The Street Sheet is a publication of the Coalition on Homelessness. Some stories are collectively written, and some stories have individual authors. But whoever sets fingers to keyboard, all stories are formed by the collective work of dozens of volunteers, and our outreach to hundreds of homeless people.

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*Street Sheet is published and distributed on the unceded ancestral homeland of the Ramaytush Ohlone peoples. We recognize and honor the ongoing presence and stewardship of the original people of this land. We recognize that homelessness can not truly be ended until this land is returned to its original stewards.*

ORGANIZE WITH US

HOUSING JUSTICE WORKING GROUP  
TUESDAYS @ NOON

The Housing Justice Workgroup is working toward a San Francisco in which every human being can have and maintain decent, habitable, safe, and secure housing. This meeting is in English and Spanish and open to everyone! Email [mcarrera@cohsf.org](mailto:mcarrera@cohsf.org) to get involved!

HUMAN RIGHTS WORKING GROUP  
WEDNESDAYS @12:30

The Human Rights Workgroup has been doing some serious heavy lifting on these issues: conducting direct research, outreach to people on the streets, running multiple campaigns, developing policy, staging direct actions, capturing media attention, and so much more. All those down for the cause are welcome to join! Email [lpierce@cohsf.org](mailto:lpierce@cohsf.org)

EVERYONE IS INVITED TO JOIN OUR WORKING GROUP MEETINGS!

# Coalition on Homelessness v. San Francisco

**What's at Stake:** Coalition on Homelessness is a challenge to the City and County of San Francisco's efforts to criminalize homelessness through an array of unconstitutional practices, including confiscating and destroying the personal property of unhoused people without adequate notice or due process, and citing and arresting unhoused people for sleeping in public.

**SUMMARY:** In September 2022, the ACLU of Northern California and the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area filed a lawsuit on behalf of the Coalition on Homelessness and several individual plaintiffs against the City and County of San Francisco and Mayor London Breed, challenging their unconstitutional treatment of unhoused San Franciscans. The lawsuit sought to end the City's practice of unlawfully seizing and destroying unhoused people's personal property and citing and arresting unhoused people for sleeping in public, despite having no shelter to go to.

For years, San Francisco has responded to its homelessness crisis by pushing unhoused people out of sight—destroying their survival items and arresting and jailing them for unavoidable behavior like sleeping in public. These regressive mass incarceration-era policies do nothing to address the City's affordable housing crisis, and only perpetuate homelessness.

In December 2022, a federal judge in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California issued a preliminary injunction in the lawsuit, directing San Francisco to immediately halt its unconstitutional enforcement of laws that criminalize homelessness and to stop unlawfully seizing and destroying unhoused people's survival gear and personal property. In granting the order, the Court also acknowledged that the City's cruel policies have made it more difficult for people to exit homelessness. In January 2024, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld this order.

In June 2024, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *City of Grants Pass v. Johnson* that the cruel and unusual punishment clause of the Eighth Amendment does not prohibit cities from punishing unhoused people for sleeping in public, even if they have nowhere else to go. That ruling prevented the plaintiffs from pursuing similar claims in this case, but it did not affect the plaintiffs' remaining claims, which focus on the City's unlawful destruction of the personal property of unhoused persons. Those claims have survived several motions for dismissal and a motion for summary judgment by the City and are headed to trial during the summer of 2025.

Source: [aclunc.org](https://aclunc.org)

Sept. 27, 2022

The Coalition on Homelessness (COH) and seven unhoused San Francisco residents sue the City of San Francisco over its practices in homeless sweeps. COH accuses one City department, Public Works, of violating its own "bag and tag" policy by disposing of homeless people's possessions, including tents, sleeping materials, IDs, medications and other survival gear.

DEC. 23, 2022

In U.S. District Court of Northern California, U.S. Magistrate Judge Donna Ryu issues a preliminary injunction, ruling that the City must refrain from dismantling encampments when no shelter is available. Ryu cites *Martin v. Boise* (2018), which held that ticketing and jailing unhoused people for camping violates Eighth Amendment protections against cruel and unusual punishment.

AUG. 10, 2023

COH offers to settle its case with the City. In rejecting the settlement offer, City Attorney David Chiu decries the offer as "political theater."

AUG. 23, 2023

Both sides argue before the Ninth Circuit. At issue is the definition of "involuntary homelessness" in the District Court's ruling. The panel of judges denies the City's motion to modify previous ruling without prejudice.

AUG. 24, 2023

The District Court denies COH's request to appoint a "special master" to monitor homeless operations and ensure the City's compliance with the preliminary injunction.

SEPT. 22, 2023

Gov. Gavin Newsom files an "amicus curiae" (or "friend of the court") brief to the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) to review the Ninth

Circuit's ruling in *Grants Pass v. Johnson*. That case focuses on an Oregon city displacing unsheltered residents living outside. Several other cities file similar briefs.

JAN. 12, 2024

SCOTUS announces it will review *Grants Pass*. The City files a motion to stay COH's lawsuit pending the SCOTUS decision.

APRIL 11, 2024

The Lawyers' Committee of Civil Rights, an organization representing COH, files an amicus brief supporting Gloria Johnson, the opposing party in *Grants Pass*. Over 1,000 briefs supporting Johnson, including one from the Western Regional Advocacy Project, are also filed.

JUNE 28, 2024

SCOTUS announces its 6-3 ruling in favor of *Grants Pass*, effectively overturning *Martin*. Under the ruling, punishing people for sleeping outside is no longer unconstitutional under the Eighth Amendment. COH's lawyers announce they will continue the lawsuit against the City.

JUNE 8, 2025

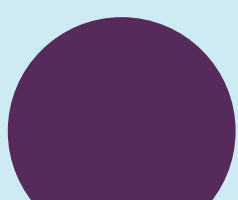
Judge Ryu dismisses COH's claims of "organizational standing" because it was not harmed by the City's unlawful seizure and destruction of property, though individual members were. However, Ryu ruled, COH may pursue claims based on "associational standing."

June 12, 2025

Judge Ryu denies the City's request to toss the lawsuit. She rules that two individual plaintiffs—Sarah Cronk and Joshua Donohoe—still have housing even though they're still at risk of homelessness even if they're currently housed.

JULY 30, 2025

Scheduled trial date.





# HOMELESS-RELATED ARRESTS, CALIFORNIA CITIES AFTER SUPR

***In major cities and more rural areas, arrests and citations rose in the months following last summer’s Supreme Court decision. In some places, officials insist the events are unrelated.***

Homeless residents of some of California’s biggest cities increasingly are facing criminal penalties for the actions they take to survive on the street, according to a first-of-its-kind CalMatters analysis of data throughout the state.

June 28 marked the one-year anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in *Grants Pass v. Johnson*, which upended California’s homelessness strategy by allowing cities to enforce blanket bans on camping — even if no shelter beds are available. Immediately after the decision, unhoused Californians and the people who help them reported seeing an increase in enforcement. But CalMatters’ reporting, gleaned from more than 100 public records requests, appears to be the first statewide effort to quantify that increase.

CalMatters analyzed data on arrests and citations for camping and other homelessness-related offenses for 2024, comparing the six months before the June 28 Supreme Court decision to the six months after. We found increases in cities throughout the state, even in those where local leaders said they didn’t change their policy as a result of *Grants Pass*.

Here are some of the places with the most significant increases, according to police data:

- In San Francisco, then-mayor London Breed promised to be “very aggressive” in moving encampments following the *Grants Pass* decision. She delivered: Arrests and citations for illegal lodging increased from 71 in the six months before the ruling to 427 in the six months after — a 500% increase.
- Even though Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass spoke out against the *Grants Pass* decision, calling it “disappointing” and vowing to lead with housing instead of enforcement, homelessness-related arrests increased 68% after the ruling.
- Citations and arrests doubled in San Diego, which also doubled the size of its police teams that respond to homelessness.
- In Sacramento, the number of citations and arrests nearly tripled — from 96 in the six months before *Grants Pass*, to 283 in the six months after. From January through May 2025, Sacramento police had already issued 844 citations and arrests, suggesting enforcement continues to trend upward.
- Stockton issued just 14 homelessness-related citations in the six months before the *Grants Pass* decision. In the six months after the

ruling came out, that number jumped to 213.

- It wasn’t just big cities that saw more enforcement: Citations and arrests increased by more than two-thirds in Ukiah, on the North Coast, and more than doubled in Merced, in the San Joaquin Valley.

The ruling, which found that the city of Grants Pass, Oregon did not violate the constitution by banning encampments throughout the city when no shelter was available, accelerated a shift toward a pro-enforcement approach to homelessness. Buoyed by voters fed up with large encampments near their homes, Gov. Gavin Newsom used the opportunity to urge cities to ramp up enforcement and pass anti-camping ordinances.

The people making the case for enforcement argue it’s a type of “tough love” that’s sometimes necessary to get people off the street. If someone refuses multiple offers of help, the threat of arrest might make them finally say yes, said San Diego Police Department Capt. Steve Shebloski.

“I hope nobody has to go to jail, and I hope everybody takes services,” he said. “I just don’t think that’s the reality of where we’re at with certain individuals.”

The type of help police can offer varies widely by city and situation. In San Diego, the Homeless Outreach Team, which includes police officers as well as social workers and mental health professionals, is supposed to offer shelter before issuing citations or making arrests. Between May 2024 and May 2025, that team made 357 placements into housing or shelter, Shebloski said. People refused help 2,471 times, he said. And they accepted another form of services 3,578 times, from a referral to a treatment program, to a ride to an appointment, to a new toothbrush. The department does not track how many people wanted shelter but couldn’t get it.

In Stockton, police take a more hands-off approach: They hand out flyers with six phone numbers people can call to reach homeless shelters and other organizations.

But shelter beds aren’t always available. Last year, California had more than 187,000 unhoused residents, and fewer than 76,000 year-round shelter and transitional housing beds, according to data compiled by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Doctors, academics and social workers who work with people on the street often say arrests make it harder for unhoused people to get back on their feet. When someone living outside gets a citation, they often miss their court date — they might lose the ticket or simply forget the date amidst the chaos of life on the street — which leads the court to issue a warrant for their arrest. People with active warrants can’t qualify for many housing and treatment programs.

“They don’t understand. It’s not camping. It’s surviving.”

Beverly Harding, 58, Sacramento

In many situations, people cited or arrested for homelessness-related crimes are never charged, or the charges are quickly dismissed. But the threat of an arrest can be just as disruptive as the arrest itself. People leave their campsites to avoid getting taken to jail, and in so doing, lose touch with the outreach workers trying to connect them with housing and other services.

“In a weird way, it undermines the housing process to such an extent that you end up working for homelessness and against the people who are experiencing homelessness,” said Brett Feldman, director of street medicine at USC.

Some leaders are pushing back against the enforcement mindset. This week, two Democratic Congress members introduced the “Housing Not Handcuffs Act,” which would prohibit federal agencies from punishing people for living outside if they have no other option.

***Grants Pass made no difference, say cities where arrests and citations spiked***

In the year since the *Grants Pass* decision, at least 50 cities and three counties in California passed new ordinances targeting homeless encampments, according to a recent analysis by UC Berkeley Law students and faculty. Some ban camping only in specific areas, such as near schools, waterways or levees, while others ban camping throughout the entire city. Some cities, such as Fresno, made camping a misdemeanor punishable by up to a year in jail and \$1,000 in fines.

Even cities that didn’t pass ordinances started cracking down on encampments with new vigor, using old rules.

To quantify that crackdown, CalMatters filed more than 100 public records requests to police departments, sheriff’s offices, prosecutors and city and county governments for data on arrests, citations, charges filed and encampment removals. Those requests span a sample of about 35 large and small cities and counties throughout California. When requesting law enforcement data, CalMatters asked each agency to provide a list of the ordinances it uses to address homeless camps. In some cities that included ordinances that specifically prohibit encampments, but it could also include rules that ban sitting or lying on the sidewalk, impeding the right of way, storing belongings on public property and violating city park rules.

Los Angeles Councilmember Nithya Raman said she was surprised to see the data showing arrests related to homelessness increased 68% in her city, jumping from 920 in the six months before *Grants Pass*, to 1,549 in the six months after. Not all of those arrests led to someone being taken to jail. Some were what is called “noncustodial arrests,” where the person is released on site.

There were no policy changes in how the city dealt with encampments after the Supreme Court ruling, Raman said. But the city continues to expand its list of “sensitive locations,” such as

# CITATIONS SOARED IN THESE SUPREME COURT CASE

MARISA KENDALL, CALMATTERS

near schools, where it bans encampments, she said.

“One of the city’s top priorities is to reduce unsheltered homelessness and bring people indoors and off the streets,” Raman said. “Our urgency to do that did not come from the Grants Pass decision in any way, shape or form. We were already focused on that.”

Mayor Bass’ office did not respond to requests for comment.

But Feldman, who provides medical care in encampments on the streets of Los Angeles, said he saw a noticeable change after the Supreme Court ruling. Suddenly, the areas where his team used to regularly find people were empty. That was a problem, because only about 5% of the team’s patients have reliable cell phones. If medics can’t find their patients, they can’t give them important follow-up care — such as their monthly antipsychotic injection or medicine to treat opioid addiction. As a result, their patients get sicker.

“It was really tough for a few months,” Feldman said, though he believes enforcement has gone back down to pre-Grants Pass levels in recent months. That’s because most people have moved out of the heavily enforced areas (such as around schools) and re-settled in places that escape police notice, he said.

The data CalMatters obtained from the Los Angeles Police Department does not include 2025 information.

San Diego similarly did not pass a new camping ban after Grants Pass. Its “unsafe camping” ordinance passed in 2023, and police also enforce older rules that prohibit encroaching on the public right of way. Shebloski says Grants Pass hasn’t changed anything in San Diego, despite the correlated increase in enforcement — 524 arrests and citations in the six months before Grants Pass, and 1,045 in the six months after. That’s because the police department added officers to its Neighborhood Police Division and Homeless Outreach Team, under the direction of its new police chief — which coincidentally lined up with Grants Pass, he said.

“I can tell you there’s absolutely zero operational direction that, ‘Grants Pass is now passed, go out there and write tickets,’” he said.

## ***Outreach workers struggle to find clients***

Beverly Harding, 58, has been on the streets for about 10 years. For the last year of that time, she was sleeping in a makeshift tent she pitched in various places along X Street in Sacramento, by attaching tarps to the shopping cart that held her food.

She still cries sometimes when recounting her run-ins with police, who she says have confiscated treasured items, including a necklace that held her mother’s ashes. An arrest last fall was particularly traumatic. A friend’s dog had bitten her wrist a few days before, and she’d gone to the hospital for

treatment, she said. When the officers grabbed her injured wrist and handcuffed her, Harding said she almost passed out from the pain. She said she still gets shooting pains through her damaged wrist.

“They don’t understand,” Harding said. “It’s not camping. It’s surviving. And if you don’t have a home, where else are you going to try to survive? Anywhere you can.”

These days, the authorities are moving unhoused people around Sacramento on a daily basis, said Joe Smith. He’s the director of residential services for homeless services nonprofit Hope Cooperative and board chair for the county’s continuum of care, which coordinates the area’s response to homelessness. Because of that movement, Smith said, people are seeking out hidden spots to sleep, away from the gaze of law enforcement.

That’s making it harder for outreach workers, who have housing and other services to offer, to find their homeless clients. Smith saw that first-hand last fall. An unhoused man finally got a spot in Smith’s Hope Landing housing program after years of trying to get off the streets, but no one could find him. The program pushed his move-in date back three times, in hopes that someone would be able to track him down.

The client eventually resurfaced and Smith was able to get him into housing earlier this month. It was just in time: A few more days, and the client would have lost the spot and had to start the entire process over. Even so, the delay meant he needlessly spent about six extra months on the street.

Smith, who was homeless himself between 2005 and 2011, said he’s “deeply concerned” the increase in enforcement is making other people lose out on housing opportunities.

“How devastating is that?” he asked. “Surviving outside becomes a lifestyle for you, and your ticket out comes up and nobody can find you. What a shame that is.”

## ***A missing tent doesn’t mean someone has found housing***

Shortly after the Grants Pass decision, then-Mayor Breed vowed to crack down on homeless encampments. What difference did the 500% increase in arrests and citations make in the city?

The number of tents and structures on San Francisco’s streets dipped to 165 in June — the lowest it’s been since the city began counting regularly in April 2019. That’s down from 360 in April 2024.

But just because someone has ditched their tent doesn’t mean they are off the street.

“Most people are just sleeping on cardboard or on the street and moving every night,” said Chris Herring, a UCLA professor of sociology who researches homelessness in San Francisco and beyond.

In Stockton, the city launched a “take back our parks” campaign to crack down on encampments

after Grants Pass. Around the same time, the police department was recovering from a COVID-19 pandemic-era staffing shortage and increased its staffing in the departments that typically respond to homeless encampments.

Police issued hardly any citations for violating park rules (including camping, drinking and lighting fires in a public park) or obstructing sidewalks in the six months before the Grants Pass ruling. In the six months after, police cited people for those offenses 213 times.

Police give a 72-hour warning before they clear an encampment, said Officer David Scott, public information officer for the Stockton Police Department. If people don’t move after those 72 hours are up, officers may cite them. In rare cases, if someone is being combative, police may make an arrest instead, he said.

Police also hand out flyers with phone numbers people can call for housing, shelter beds, showers, meals and other resources.

“We’re always going to be out there,” Scott said. “We want to provide those resources and help to those individuals that are vulnerable. And we’re going to continue the efforts in that area. But at the end of the day, we’ve got to make sure that our city is safe and as clean as we can get it.”

The flyers list numbers for six service providers (including one that’s listed twice). But there’s no guarantee any will be able to help with whatever the homeless person calling needs. St. Mary’s Community Services, one of the providers listed, had two-dozen beds available across its men’s, women’s and recuperative care programs as of June 25. A week before, it had just 11. None were available for families.

Police have no way of tracking whether anyone calling St. Mary’s or the other providers gets help, or whether they just move a few blocks down the road and start the cycle over again.

And for some people, police interactions don’t stop just because they’ve moved indoors.

After living on the streets for about a decade, Harding recently moved into a community of tiny homes for homeless residents in Sacramento, where case workers are supposed to help her find permanent housing.

Shortly after, Harding and her boyfriend were hanging out in front of a nearby laundromat, using the Wi-Fi. She was downloading music onto her phone, and he was downloading games. Harding said they had a thin blanket over them, because it was cold.

An officer showed up and told them camping wasn’t allowed there, and they had to move, Harding said.

“I said, ‘Excuse me. I’m not camping. I live next door.’”

*Aaron Schrank and Lisa Halverstadt contributed to this story. Originally published in calmatters.org*



# FOR DISABLED PEOPLE, THINGS WILL GET UGLY UNDER “BIG, BEAUTIFUL” ACT

JACK BRAGEN

Donald Trump just signed his big bill. It isn't a "beautiful bill." It is a crime against the American middle class and poor. And we are in a war of misinformation—but that's beside the point. This will impact me as a disabled writer, and it won't be "beautiful" at all.

I am at the bottom, and I can attest from that perspective to all of the power-hungry politicians who want in on the political and monetary pie. My perspective is that of a bug on the ground who Trump casually stomps to death even though he doesn't really have to do that. I live on public benefits because writing barely pays anything, and I'm truly disabled for medical and other reasons. I need government benefits to stay alive and intact.

I'm not exaggerating about being disabled. It is not obvious to people until you see me trying to walk a block to the corner store. It is not obvious unless you see me without having taken my medication that manages overt symptoms of psychosis, but that also puts a huge damper on my ability to function. If I weren't struggling with a disability, I would have shed the yoke of public benefits decades ago. No conscientious or sensible person would choose to live on disability benefits over working, if we have a reasonable choice.

People who rely on Social Security and/or Social Supplemental Income

to live on are not doing so for the fabulous lifestyle it provides—mainly because it doesn't provide one. It is generally a move we were forced into by circumstances we could not resolve. Most people would rather be working.

A significant perk of working is that you are considered socially acceptable. Most people in the economic middle do not think of disabled people who live on their tax dollars. It is different when they finally have a family member or close friend who becomes or is disabled and can't compete in a job situation or can't complete an Ivy League education and who chooses something less demanding.

A counselor once upon a time, while speaking animatedly, likened mental health work opportunities to "put[ting] a broom in your hand and shov[ing] pills down your throat."

That was true for a number of jobs where the requirement was primarily to have a body and to do a relatively simple job. When I was 17, a head of a janitorial service I worked for briefly told me that I was hired "because we needed a body." He had initiated the call with the line: "Your check is in the mail." I don't understand why he chose the path of maximum offensiveness. Maybe he believed I couldn't do anything about it. This was probably accurate. But

I hounded this employer until I was paid for the little bit of work I performed. I also threatened to sue.

Trump will cut off any mentally ill Social Security recipients who appear able-bodied. This will cause a lot of deaths on the street, and a lot more incarceration. Once he rams through his big hideous bill, it won't be the end of Trump's destruction. He is planning to do a lot more damage than we have seen. He has more than three years left in office, assuming his health remains good, and there is no guarantee he will go along with any sort of peaceful transfer of power. He will very likely remain in office for the rest of his life.

Being on the bottom and looking up at a giant shoe about to smash me to death is not exceedingly comfortable. But I have been in that situation, so I can claim to know something about it.

Tuning into the news recently, I learned of the work requirement in Trump's bill: If you don't have at least 80 hours of employment, classwork or volunteering per month, you won't get Medicaid. This puts mentally disabled people in the crosshairs.

I know from experience that antipsychotics block the ability to do physical work. At 18, I tried

very hard to do janitor work while medicated. The misery and difficulty of this were beyond description. Antipsychotics don't just block the area affected by symptoms, but all parts of the central nervous system. In 1983, I quit my medication and successfully worked as a janitor for about a year and a half, earning \$10,000, which at the time wasn't spectacular but was acceptable money. Then I became ill and was even worse off than I had been when I first was put on medication. After that, working was out of the question.

You must not require mentally disabled "able-bodied" men to work to get Medicaid. Such an edict will cause millions of recovered mentally ill people to die on the street or in prison. This will come to pass in 2027, after the midterm elections, as long as the government adheres to the current timeline of the legislation.

This could morph into a totalitarian nightmare if Trump takes it far enough. History is filled with examples of forced labor, such as Nazi Germany or Stalin-era Russia. Maybe we won't see anything so extreme, but it would still be bad.

*Jack Bragen currently lives in Clayton. His writings are searchable.*

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# FREEDOM COSTS

KENYOTA

*Content warning: This piece contains a reference to suicide.*

I was homeless on the streets of San Francisco, and in several cities throughout the Bay Area, for over a decade. During those years I experienced what it felt like to be a non-person. I received the harsh stares, societal shunning and feelings of inadequacy that are common among those considered lost in the world of the unhoused. During this decades-long journey I felt the absence of hope as I saw my dreams drift from my ability to hold them. I could not imagine a life of love, acceptance or stability. My battle with chronic addiction, recidivism and rejection took its toll on me and I saw suicide as the only way to improve my situation. So, I attempted to end my life on a lonely March morning.

Obviously, I fell short of my intended goal, and for that I can only credit the watchful eye of someone who cared enough to alert medical staff that I might have done harm to myself amongst the bushes I had hid myself in. I woke up in a hospital with nurses and doctors attempting to save me. I realized then, I had failed. I couldn't even off myself without it going wrong. My life was a mess before the attempt—what was it to be now that I was still alive ?

Circumstances notwithstanding, I have always been of the belief that I was completely responsible for the condition of my life. I grew up with the understanding that I made my life hell and others were not to blame. That's a noble thought but a bitter pill to swallow when I came to see that my life was littered with intentions which were never realized and that confusion was my unwanted companion. For brevity's sake, I'll simply share that I lived in a way that was dangerous and prodigal. I was unemployable due to my chronic substance abuse, my

constant trouble with the law and my unwillingness to responsibility for the choices I was making. Every move I made turned out to be the wrong one and I found very few who wanted to help me find my way.

Because of my involvement with law enforcement, recidivism sunk its claws into me. My life resembled a merry-go-round of incarceration and short-lived freedom. After more than seven supervisory violations I was completely without a solution. I knew if I continued on the road I had been traveling, I was on my way to a bleak future which consisted of a cold cell. I desperately needed resources such as housing, mental health counseling and treatment from self-inflicted PTSD, and the other real world troubles faced by those caught up in the madness I was responsible for creating.

Although I knew the future looked bleak I could not find it in me to do better. I used more, became more unhinged mentally and blamed no one. I was always aware of the responsibility I was ignoring but I also knew a critical fact: I needed some help, but from where and from whom? Alameda County, although beautiful, fails in the human resource arena. With one shelter that can hold less than thirty people, Oakland is a difficult place to find housing. This understanding moved me to throw caution to the wind and completely disregard my probation obligations by absconding to San Francisco. And it was here that my life began to take a different course.

In a word, I was on the lam! If I ran into the law, I would be guaranteed a jail cell. The decision to run from my responsibilities was not new to me. I was a habitual runner. However, I had to find a way to live more predictably, responsibly and lawfully if I were to experience any success from my choice. I was in San Francisco and

I quickly availed myself to services that were impossible to find in Oakland. I checked into a shelter and the experience taught me to be appreciative for what little they can provide. The shelter provided me a place to stay warm, gather necessities, and begin setting goals. It also set the stage for my placement in permanent housing in an SRO.

After receiving notice that I was going to be housed I expressed apprehension and my personal fear of failure to shelter staff. I felt that I was going to blow my housing opportunity through my chronic addiction and poor decision-making. I saw myself getting eventually evicted and back on the streets and, although the shelter was far from ideal, at least I wouldn't lose my bed.

That's when a miracle occurred: That staff member told me that I was wrong about my future. She told me that I was going to make it and I would do just fine. It wasn't her encouraging words that convinced me, it was the fact that she honestly believed in me. Living as I had been, I found that I could think of no one who took me seriously, let alone actually believe in my abilities to forge a better life in San Francisco. When I left the shelter I left with the confidence that I could regain a life I had only imagined. A life free of loss and unspeakable loneliness.

Permanent housing provided me the opportunity to dream once again. After more than fifteen years of unemployment, I found work as a brand ambassador for a temporary employment agency and I have been goal-setting since. I enrolled back in college to pursue my degree as a student at the University of Arkansas Grantham and completed two semesters before taking a break.

If it had not been for the assistance

provided by the citizens of this city I don't know what my end would have been. There are no words which convey the gratitude I feel every day when I wake up in a place to call my own. I have learned the importance of shaking off the complacency that defined my previous manner of living and became content with what I have and what I have to offer. I utilize my time by sharing my experiences and what has worked for me the past three years in becoming the best example of an individual I can be. I volunteer for an organization which provides housing support and other resources to the interested and I find that to be the most rewarding part of my new life. It's far from perfect but it's measurably better than it was. With faith and honesty, I can overcome my personal demons which have been troublesome.

I have a message for those who are unhoused in the city: There's power in the words and things we do. We can speak a lot of things into existence, both good and bad, but if we don't put forth any effort behind those words then we are nothing more than our best unfulfilled intentions. In other words, we all have the opportunity for a better tomorrow if we take advantage of the resources others have painstakingly provided. I had to shake my feelings of entitlement to see that I was only limiting myself by thinking anyone's sympathy could make me a better individual. That had to come from within.

In closing, I want to offer what I have been provided, so if my brief story resonates then please feel free to contact me via the Supportive Housing and Overdose Prevention Network, which you can find online, and I'll be more than happy to share the knowledge I've gained by utilizing the resources available throughout the city.

BECOME A VENDOR  
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HOMELESSNESS!

STREET SHEET is currently recruiting vendors to sell the newspaper around San Francisco.

Vendors pick up the papers for free at our office in the Tenderloin and sell them for \$2 apiece at locations across the City. You get to keep all the money you make from sales! Sign up to earn extra income while also helping elevate the voices of the homeless writers who make this paper so unique, and promoting the vision of a San Francisco where every human being has a home.


**TO SIGN UP, VISIT OUR OFFICE AT 280 TURK ST FROM 10AM-4PM ON MONDAY-THURSDAY AND 10AM-NOON ON FRIDAY**





How to be an Ally to people experiencing Homelessness


Be a good neighbor. Introduce yourself!


Ask what their name is, how their day is going, or comment on the weather, like you would with your other neighbors. Build up to having more meaningful interactions. Ask how you can be of assistance. Here are some common needs:

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**Hygiene:** Offer access to water for drinking, hand washing, and bathing. Share a list of bathrooms: [sfpublicworks.org/pitstop](https://sfpublicworks.org/pitstop)
- 

**Trash:** Let them know the street cleaning day. Ask if they need extra trash bags. Trash can be left on the curb and will usually get picked up by the leading truck.
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**Substance use:** Visit [harmreduction.org](https://harmreduction.org) to learn about available resources. Treatment can be accessed in-person at 1380 Howard Street.
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**Charging:** Offer a power source for charging phones and other devices.
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**Mail:** When trust is built, consider offering them your mailing address for their important mail. It is crucial to set boundaries and clarify expectations.

Advocate for real solutions.

**Call** your Supervisor and the Mayor’s office and pressure them to open more “Pit-Stop” bathrooms, hotel rooms, safe campsites, and permanent affordable housing.

**Organize** neighbors to provide mutual aid. Reach out to groups such as Cole Valley Haight Allies or Rad Mission Neighbors. Host a speaker to talk about real solutions! The Coalition on Homelessness can help.

**Educate** yourself! Read the Street Sheet and make sure you know the basic facts: Most homeless people were San Franciscans before they lost their housing, and the reason we have mass homelessness is that rents have increased while naturally occurring low income housing has disappeared, and the city hasn’t prioritized budget dollars to fill that gap.

Things not to do:

**Do not** call the police on people who aren’t causing or threatening violence. Thousands of homeless people end up cited and incarcerated every year for simply sleeping, and several unhoused people have been shot by police in the last decade. Police contact can prolong a person’s homelessness.

**Do not** call 311 to sweep away people experiencing homelessness. People who are working towards getting housed need to start over when their belongings are thrown away. You can call 311 to help with trash pickup, illegal dumping, or a blocked doorway, if you can’t sort it out with your homeless neighbors.

Support outreach organizations:

The Coalition on Homelessness, North Beach Citizens, Homeless Youth Alliance, Dolores Street Community Services, Night Ministry, Faithful Fools, Project Homeless Connect, Glide, Youth With A Mission, Larkin Street Youth Services, Homeless Prenatal

For more information, visit The Coalition on Homelessness at:

COHSF.org

**Psychiatric crisis?** Check in with them before calling Mobile Crisis at (415) 970-4000

**Medical emergency?** Call 911. Make it clear that this is a medical emergency and not a police emergency.

**Medically compromised** but don’t need an ambulance? Call street medicine: (828) 217-5800

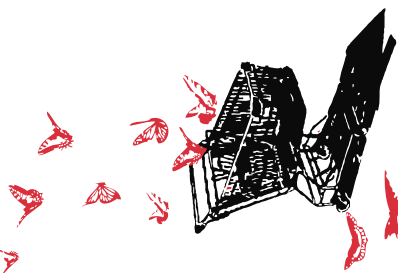
**Interpersonal conflict?** Call your neighborhood Community Ambassadors, listed at: [sfcap.org](https://sfcap.org)

**Unhoused people in need of shelter** or other services can show up by 6pm at Mission Action to see if they have a bed: 1050 South Van Ness

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



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