



RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL

No. 337

EFFECTIVE July 21, 2024

WHEREAS, Homelessness is a complex situation arising from a myriad of factors including socioeconomic status, domestic violence experiences, mental health care accessibility, and financial instability; and

WHEREAS, In Providence, conditions such as the high demand for affordable housing, insufficient development of multi-family units, and economic disparities are leading to a rising cause of homelessness, significantly increasing the risk of evictions and individuals becoming unhoused; and

WHEREAS, This has resulted in more than 2,100 people on the waiting list for housing and more than 800 people waiting for beds in shelters in the state, and over 100 people living in unhoused encampments in Providence; and

WHEREAS, The recent Supreme Court decision, *City of Grants Pass, Oregon v. Johnson*, made on June 28, 2024, permits punitive measures against people sleeping in public spaces even when all local shelters are at capacity, and the Providence City Council expresses intense opposition to this decision leading to increased criminalization of the homeless population in Providence; and

WHEREAS, The City has recently addressed unhoused encampments in a manner that is counterproductive and inhumane, leading to reduced trust in shelter systems among unhoused people, lost medications and important personal documents, people discouraged from seeking social services, increases in the number of avoidable arrests, and disturbances to unhoused peoples' routines and access to necessary services; and

WHEREAS, These harmful eviction and displacement policies raise major concerns that, in the wake of the Supreme Court ruling, the City may take its reactionary and criminalizing measures a step further; and

WHEREAS, Providence has already enacted positive and proven policies, such as approving the first-in-the-nation state-sanctioned harm reduction center, demonstrating a commitment to compassionate and effective solutions; and

WHEREAS, The city should focus on implementing more proactive policies like this, as opposed to punitive measures, to address homelessness with dignity and humanity.

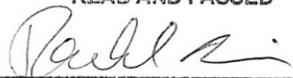
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, The Providence City Council is profoundly concerned by this Supreme Court decision, made on June 28, 2024, which permits punitive measures against people sleeping in public spaces even when all local shelters are at capacity, and strongly opposes its application in the City; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, The Providence City Council strongly opposes all legislation criminalizing homelessness, including those which punish public sleeping, camping, sheltering, storing belongings, and vehicle dwelling; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, The City must implement stronger legal protections to safeguard unhoused individuals' human rights and continue to advance evidence-based policies that alleviate the state of homelessness with dignity.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, That, upon passage, copies of this resolution be transmitted to the offices of Providence Mayor Brett Smiley, Providence Chief of Police Oscar Perez, Rhode Island Governor Daniel McKee, the Director of the Rhode Island Department of Health Jerome Larkin, the acting Secretary of Rhode Island Department of Housing, and the Executive Director of Rhode Island Coalition to End Homelessness.

IN CITY COUNCIL
JUL 1 1 2024
READ AND PASSED


RACHEL M. MILLER, PRESIDENT

CLERK

Effective without the
Mayor's Signature

Tina L. Mastroianni
City Clerk