



# ELIMINATING THE CRIMINALIZATION OF POVERTY

## VALUE

We'd all like to believe that if we're facing challenges or even crisis, our community will step up and help us through, with respect and compassion. That's how community should work – we share responsibility for each other and come together to face challenges. When people are experiencing poverty, homelessness, and other economic crises, they want what we all want: to be met with support, respect and compassion.

## PROBLEM

However, the strategy of aggressively deploying police to address every level of community disturbance or problem, including relatively minor infractions, often means that people experiencing poverty and homelessness are met first by the police. This erodes community trust, further exacerbates the challenges that poverty and homeless already pose, and does nothing to increase community safety.

## SOLUTION

Local and state governments should prohibit law enforcement from profiling individuals on the basis of perceived housing status and invest in more comprehensive long-term and short-term housing options; ensure that housing placements respect individuals self-identified gender specifications; improve police training on interacting with homeless communities, and enact an enforceable Homeless Bill of Rights measure that ensures that homelessness is not treated as a crime.

## ACTION

Urge your local and state governments to enact policies that protect the dignity and rights of people experiencing poverty and homelessness.