



# Hoosier Housing Needs Coalition

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## **Housing Coalition Applauds Indiana General Assembly for Rejecting Criminalization of Homelessness for Third and Final Time this Session**

INDIANAPOLIS, IN – Following the conclusion of Indiana’s legislative session, the [Hoosier Housing Needs Coalition](#) applauds the Indiana General Assembly for rejecting for the third and final time the efforts of out-of-state special interests to criminalize homelessness in Indiana.

The most recent [rejection](#) occurred just a day before the close of the 2025 session of the Indiana General Assembly, when the criminalization of homelessness language that had been [inserted behind closed doors](#) the previous day was removed from the Conference Committee Report for HB 1014 (Rep. Alex Zimmerman, District 67). Previously, a broader version of the criminalization language was introduced in HB 1662 (Rep. Michelle Davis, District 54), which [failed](#) when the bill was not called down for a final House vote by the February 20 deadline in the first half of the session. Later, an abbreviated version of the criminalization language was [inserted](#) via a House committee amendment into SB 197 (Sen. Aaron Freeman, District 32) without an opportunity for public testimony. That language was then [removed](#) in Conference Committee on April 17 following thousands of calls and messages from HHNC members and partners.

All three versions of the criminalization of homelessness language were backed by the [Cicero Institute](#), an out-of-state special interest group responsible for pushing [cookie-cutter legislation](#) state to state with the same inflexible, misguided approach to homelessness. The binding feature of all three of Indiana’s criminalization bills was the requirement for local law

enforcement to enforce a new Class C Misdemeanor to jail and fine vulnerable Hoosiers up to 60 days and \$500 for sleeping outside in public, whether adequate housing or services are available or not. The broader version of the cookie-cutter legislation (like that found in HB 1662) also strips state and local funding for proven solutions to homelessness in order to create punitive forced homeless encampments. This wrong-headed criminalization approach has led to dehumanizing and dangerous outcomes in states like Kentucky that have passed this cookie-cutter legislation, including this past December when [a pregnant Louisville woman was detained for 'street camping' while in labor](#).

The Hoosier Housing Needs Coalition thanks Indiana's legislative leaders for three times rejecting this cruel and counterproductive path. The Coalition also thanks its 2,500-strong membership, partners, and regular Hoosiers for tirelessly reaching out to their state legislators to urge them to make the correct decision three times this session. And the Coalition gives special thanks to representatives of other stakeholder communities, including the Indiana Sheriffs Association, Helping Veterans and Families (HVAF), and the Indiana Association of Counties, for their public testimony and opposition to the criminalization of homelessness legislation.

After rejecting the wrong path of the criminalization of homelessness, the General Assembly now has the critical opportunity to address the underlying factors contributing to Indiana's housing stability crisis, primarily the [shortage of safe and affordable housing](#) and resources for proven homelessness services. This opportunity comes as the General Assembly passed SB 142 (Sen. Liz Brown, District 15), which will helpfully expand the state's eviction sealing program, but also passed a State Budget that [zeros out](#) the [previous](#) \$1 million annual appropriation for Housing First, the successful approach to addressing homelessness.

Members of the Hoosier Housing Needs Coalition's Steering Committee added these statements:

"Hoosiers we serve have told us in no uncertain terms - in surveys conducted across all 92 counties, through our advisory council, and through the Community Action Agencies - that housing is the top community need right now," wrote Dr. Lauren Murfree, Policy Analyst for the Indiana Community Action Poverty Institute. "Too many Hoosiers are just a paycheck away from becoming homeless, and the efforts to add criminal penalties for experiencing homelessness that were attempted this session would have pushed those already homeless further into

poverty. As one Hoosier shared, the mental and financial toll of Indiana's housing crisis was, "costing [her] financially and mentally going from motel to motel not being able to save." Criminal penalties would do nothing to address her needs or our housing crisis. We applaud the assembly for rejecting these efforts and hope future legislation will move the needle on our affordable housing crisis and job precarity, thereby preventing homelessness."

"The attention paid to the housing crisis in Indiana this session is appreciated by Indiana United Ways," wrote Brian Lohsl, Impact & Public Policy Strategist for Indiana United Ways. "The streamlined eviction sealing process passed in SB 142 will benefit Hoosier ALICE families (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) in their quest to find safe, stable, habitable housing. IUW further applauds the Indiana General Assembly for not advancing legislation that would have criminalized homelessness in certain situations. We understand the budget constraints the IGA had to manage this session, but with the increased understanding and urgency of the housing and homelessness crisis, it is unfortunate to see the Housing First funding removed from the final budget. United Ways throughout Indiana are committed to continuing to come to the table to find common sense solutions to the complex issues facing our communities. Updated ALICE information will be coming this summer to help guide elected officials when considering legislation that would affect the most vulnerable of their constituents as we know these issues will be considered in future sessions."

"On any given night in Indiana, over 500 survivors of domestic violence are fleeing their homes in search of safety," wrote Laura Berry, Executive Director of the Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence. "Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness in our state and the lack of safe and affordable housing results in survivors sleeping in their cars and on the street. Survivors should not have to choose between violence in their home or the risk of being arrested for seeking safety. The Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence applauds the Indiana General Assembly for not passing legislation that would criminalize homelessness."

"Thank you to Indiana's legislative leaders and members of the General Assembly for the hat trick of rejecting the out-of-state special interests pushing the criminalization of homelessness in Indiana three times during a single legislative session," wrote Andrew Bradley, Senior Director of Policy and Strategy for Prosperity Indiana. "In these times of economic volatility, the most vulnerable Hoosiers and the community organizations who serve them can sleep a little better knowing their elected officials chose not to force local law enforcement to fine and jail people just for not being able to afford a place to lay their heads. Indiana must once and for all shake loose the wrong-headed approach

of the Cicero Institute, which creates a road on which all paths inevitably lead back to charging homeless Hoosiers with Class C Misdemeanors and triggering an overload of our local jails, courts, and hospitals. Indiana policymakers should now take this critical opportunity to pursue [short- and long-term solutions](#) to the underlying cause of Indiana's housing crisis: a shortage of safe, affordable homes that is among the worst in the Midwest."

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**About the Hoosier Housing Needs Coalition:**

Hoosier Housing Needs Coalition (HHNC) was formed by members of Indiana's housing security advocacy community in April 2020 to support advocacy and education related to housing and homelessness prevention. HHNC convenes partners from across Indiana to advocate for immediate, medium- and long-term housing stability policy solutions and conduct education and research to achieve federal, state, and local policies.