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St. Joseph Center's Response to the Supreme Court's Grants Pass Verdict

Today's Supreme Court decision that allows people experiencing homelessness to be arrested for sleeping in a public place is a profound step backward in our nation's efforts to address homelessness. This ruling not only criminalizes the behavior of our most vulnerable neighbors but also disproportionately impacts unhoused people of color, who have historically faced systemic oppression and criminalization in this country.

Our frontline workers at St. Joseph Center, the majority of whom have experienced homelessness, engage daily with unhoused Angelenos, witnessing firsthand the struggles they endure due to systemic racism and lack of access to resources. The decision to penalize people for the mere act of sleeping outside when there are insufficient shelter beds available highlights a troubling disregard for the fundamental human rights of those affected.

The disparate impact this ruling will have on people of color facing homelessness and housing insecurity is particularly concerning. Instead of addressing the root causes of homelessness, such as the lack of affordable housing and economic opportunities, this decision places undue burdens on those who are most impacted by our country's systemic failures.

Criminalizing our unhoused neighbors further exacerbates homelessness, creating a vicious and dangerous cycle of jail, debt, and continued homelessness. According to the Prison Policy Initiative, formerly incarcerated people are almost ten times more likely to be homeless than the general public. People who have been to prison even just once experience homelessness at a rate nearly seven times higher than the general public. A criminal record can also reduce the likelihood of a callback or job offer by almost 50 percent.

"The Supreme Court's decision is a stark reminder of the deep-seated inequities that persist in our country. By criminalizing homelessness, we are punishing individuals for systemic failures," says **Dr. Ryan J. Smith, President and CEO of the St. Joseph Center**. "Our focus should be on creating sustainable solutions that address the root causes of poverty, lack of affordable housing, and homelessness, not on penalizing those who are most vulnerable. We must strive for a future where everyone has a safe place to call home."

At St. Joseph Center, we remain committed to supporting our unhoused siblings by advocating for policies and programs that provide real solutions. We stand in solidarity with those unjustly impacted by this ruling and call on our leaders to focus on compassionate, effective strategies to end homelessness in this generation.

St. Joseph Center urges all community members and policymakers to join us in advocating for just, humane, and practical solutions to homelessness. Together, we can create a society that values and uplifts every individual, regardless of their circumstances.

About St. Joseph Center

For 47 years, the St. Joseph Center has worked to address and end homelessness and poverty in Los Angeles. St. Joseph Center seeks to provide individuals, youth, and families experiencing homelessness and poverty with comprehensive housing, outreach, mental health, and job skills training tools necessary to thrive in Los Angeles and beyond.

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