

# A RESOLUTION OF THE JACKSON COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Resolution No. 2025-02

## Homeless Bill of Rights

1. Whereas, the Democratic Party of Jackson County (DPCC) acts to advance housing as a human right and justice for unsheltered community members; and
2. Whereas, the Supreme Court decision in "[City of Grants Pass v. Johnson](#)" (1) has accelerated the [criminalization of homelessness](#) (2); and
3. Whereas, preliminary statistics for Oregon in 2024 suggest that [deaths among unhoused residents](#) in Oregon are more than three times higher than for the general population and deaths among unhoused persons younger than 65 are over two times more than the same age group in the general population (3); and
4. Whereas, 224 laws in Oregon currently [restrict, criminalize and punish](#) people for performing life sustaining activities in a public space (4); and
5. Whereas, locally, Ashland has had difficulty providing extreme [weather shelter](#) for its residents (5) and recently [approved an additional enhanced law enforcement area](#) (ELEA) that criminalizes simple acts of daily living (6); and
6. Whereas, extrajudicial banishment by police or other city officials takes away an [individual's right to legal counsel](#) through due process (7) prior to judgment and penalty, thereby imposing [unusual punishment](#) (8) and [violating their civil rights](#) (9); and
7. Whereas, criminalizing homelessness [does not provide a link to social services](#) for domestic violence survivors or to people suffering from mental health or physical health issues(10); and
8. Whereas, our current criminal justice system forces individuals to constantly relocate and potentially places them at risk for arrest, jail time and court appearances, [causing them trauma and creating obstacles](#) to their attempts to improve their circumstances (11); and
9. Whereas, criminalizing the unhoused does not address the [factors that lead to homelessness](#): unemployment, low income, and unaffordable healthcare, nor does it create opportunities for employment or affordable housing (12); and
10. Whereas, by punishing survival behaviors and [demonizing and stereotyping unhoused individuals](#) as dangerous, communities come to accept police as *the* solution to poverty (13); and
11. Whereas, 2024 data from the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) shows that people who identify as Black, African American, or African continue to be [overrepresented](#) among the population experiencing homelessness, such overrepresentation making discrimination inherent in criminalizing unhoused individuals (14); and
12. Whereas, a recent study that examined nine U.S. cities concluded that criminalizing homelessness, due to the cost of police, courts, jail and hospital resources, is [more expensive](#) than investments in support and

prevention services showing, on average, that it costs \$87 to house someone in jail and only \$28 to house them in a shelter (15); and

13. Whereas, [housing is unaffordable](#) for many Jackson County residents, exacerbating homelessness (16); and
14. Whereas, recent reporting has shown a drastic increase of homelessness in Oregon and the nation and that Oregon has the nation's [eighth highest homeless rate](#) (17); and
15. Whereas, three states, [Illinois](#) (18), [Rhode Island](#) (19) and [Connecticut](#) (20), have now incorporated a homeless bill of rights; we believe that the way to create civic accountability is to create a homeless bill of rights that will guarantee every Oregon resident the same rights and privileges

**NOW, THEREFORE, THE JACKSON COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY RESOLVES AS FOLLOWS:**

Section 1: That all members of our communities should have a right to: access shelter during extreme weather; move freely; sleep; eat; exchange food in public; have 24-hour access to convenient hygiene facilities.

Section 2: That we implore our state legislature to pass a homeless bill of rights, enforced at the state level, that will hold communities accountable if they fail to provide the basic freedoms described in Section 1, above, for all community members.

Section 3: That we call on the city councils in Jackson County and our County Commissioners to ensure that those residing within their jurisdictions have the basic rights as described in Section 1, above.

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**ADOPTED** by the Jackson County Democratic Party Central Committee on the 27th day of January, 2025.

***David B. Sours***

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