BRIDGE BEYOND STATEMENT ON SUPREME COURT CASE REGARDING HOMELESSNESS

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Yet another cold winter front arrives and homelessness, housing instability, and lack of shelter remain major concerns in the US. On Friday, January 12th, 2024, while Code Blues and Winter Advisories were issued across major cities, the US Supreme Court announced it would review the legal case of Johnson v. City of Grants Pass, OR , marking the first major case related to homelessness to be heard by the Supreme Court since the 1980s.

Individuals experiencing homelessness across the country are facing issues of forced displacement, criminalization, and risk to the latest COVID-19 surge. Now, with the Supreme Court hearing the case of Johnson v. City of Grants Pass, OR, individuals experiencing homelessness are at further risk of being criminalized if the court rules in favor of Grants Pass. However, if the courts rule in favor of Johnson, this would establish a precedent in favor of protecting the humanity of individuals experiencing homelessness and housing instability. In addition, it would emphasize the importance of affordable and permanent housing in addressing the needs of our most vulnerable populations.

A similar case, Martin v. Boise, was heard by lower courts that ruled in favor of individuals experiencing homelessness stating that , "...cities cannot enforce anti-camping ordinances if they do not have enough homeless shelter beds available for their homeless population." Bridge Beyond is in full support of a housing first approach to addressing the issues and challenges facing those experiencing homelessness. No one should be criminalized for not having access to shelter or housing. Bridge Beyond encourages our audience and volunteers to visit the National Alliance to End Homelessness and sign up to take action against the criminalization of homelessness.