

Statement: Disability Rights Wisconsin Responds to Executive Order on Homelessness

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Disability Rights Wisconsin joins in condemning yesterday's executive order expanding the use of involuntary commitment for people experiencing homelessness, including those with psychiatric disabilities. This directive threatens the rights, dignity, and autonomy of some of our state's most vulnerable residents, and it moves Wisconsin in the wrong direction.

People with disabilities who are unhoused are entitled to the same constitutional protections and due process as every other US resident. The forced institutionalization of people based on disability status or housing insecurity is a violation of civil rights and a harmful return to failed policies of the past. Involuntary commitment without clear legal justification, community-based alternatives, or access to counsel is not only unjust, it is dangerous.

"In Wisconsin, people with disabilities who are unhoused don't need more policing or forced institutionalization — they need real, lasting solutions: safe, affordable housing, access to mental health care, and the supports that allow them to live with dignity in their own communities," said Jill Jacklitz, executive director. "This executive order ignores what works and instead doubles down on outdated, harmful approaches. Wisconsinites deserve policies rooted in compassion, evidence, and respect for basic rights — not punishment and control."

Rather than expanding the use of involuntary commitment, the federal government should invest in proven strategies like supportive housing, peer support services, and community-based treatment that uphold individual autonomy and promote recovery. Decades of research and the experiences of people with disabilities themselves have shown that people thrive when they are provided with the tools to make their own choices, not when those choices are stripped away.

Disability Rights Wisconsin remains committed to defending the rights of people with disabilities to live freely and safely in their communities. DRW will continue to monitor implementation of this order and oppose any efforts that violate the civil and human rights of our most vulnerable neighbors.

Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW) is a statewide private non-profit organization with a mission to advance the dignity, equality, and self-determination of people with disabilities. DRW serves as the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy system for the State of Wisconsin, charged with protecting the rights of children and adults with disabilities and keeping them free from abuse and neglect.