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RTFH Statement on the Supreme Court’s Ruling in City of Grants Pass, Oregon v. Johnson

‘This decision won’t help us solve homelessness, but it will harm people experiencing homelessness.’

SAN DIEGO (June 28, 2024)----The Regional Task Force on Homelessness (RTFH) today expressed profound disappointment in the Supreme Court’s 6-3 split decision in the case of *City of Grants Pass, Oregon v. Johnson*. Under the ruling, municipalities will be able to arrest, ticket, and fine people for sleeping outdoors on public property, even if leaders have failed to produce enough affordable housing or shelter for everyone in the community who needs it.

RTFH joined a wave of leaders, including the [National Alliance to End Homelessness](#), disheartened by the ruling, noting that it will do nothing to address the primary cause of homelessness in San Diego, across California, and in other U.S. cities: a severe, prolonged, nationwide shortage of affordable housing.

“This ruling, by a divided Supreme Court, won’t help us solve homelessness, but it will harm people experiencing homelessness. It’s inhumane. It stands up more barriers to housing. And it gives a green light to politicians and police who prefer arrests and time behind bars, rather than real solutions,” **said Tamera Kohler, CEO of RTFH**. “Homelessness is a solvable problem. We see it every month in our [inflow and outflow reports](#) – our system works. The problem is too many people are falling into homelessness. The solutions are not easy or inexpensive. It takes

leadership and dedicated resources to fund affordable housing, supportive services, and mental health treatment. As San Diego's regional leader on homelessness, RTFH will continue to advocate for best practices with proven track records, not failed policies that hurt people who need a helping hand. These are our friends and neighbors, senior citizens and families, fast-food workers, people who lost a job or an apartment, or who have been injured. They don't deserve to be jailed for sleeping. No one does."

Kohler added: "The court's ruling criminalizes homelessness and concludes the U.S. Constitution does not afford homeless individuals protection from cruel and unusual punishment, even when they have no alternative but to sleep in public. Arresting, fining, and jailing people for simply trying to survive is both costly and counterproductive, not to mention cruel. This ruling will exacerbate homelessness in San Diego, Grants Pass, and elsewhere."

"Our elected officials should be focused on these long-term, sustainable solutions that are grounded in evidence. This ruling allows leaders to shift the burden to law enforcement. This tactic has consistently failed to reduce homelessness in the past, and it will assuredly fail to reduce homelessness in the future," **said Ann Oliva, CEO of the National Alliance to End Homelessness.**

RTFH and the Alliance call on federal, state and local leaders to reject the false promises of a law enforcement approach to homelessness, and instead leverage their unique influence to advocate for the resources their communities desperately need. These include: making major and sustained investments in our nation's rental assistance programs and homelessness prevention; investing in the production and preservation of housing available to those with the lowest incomes; and increasing investments in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Homeless Assistance programs.

RTFH and the Alliance also encourage members of the public to actively engage with lawmakers to push back against the increasing trend towards criminalization of homelessness, and to advocate for the housing and services that their communities need. Resources for advocating can be found [here](#).

About the Regional Task Force on Homelessness

As the Continuum of Care (CoC) lead agency in San Diego County, RTFH administers many of the core federal requirements from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), such as serving as the collaborative applicant to HUD, administering the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), and conducting an annual Point In Time Count. RTFH also serves as a strategic planning body, funder, regional convener, promoter of best practices, trainer, and policy leader in San Diego's collective efforts to end homelessness. Learn more at: www.rtfhsd.org

About the National Alliance to End Homelessness

The National Alliance to End Homelessness is a nonprofit, non-partisan, organization committed to preventing and ending homelessness in the United States. As a leading voice on the issue of homelessness, the Alliance analyzes policy and develops pragmatic, cost-effective policy solutions; works collaboratively with the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to build state and local capacity; and provides data and research to policymakers and elected officials in order to inform policy debates and educate the public and opinion leaders nationwide.