

March 2nd 2026

Dear Mayor Johnston,

We the undersigned organizations are calling on you, Mayor Johnston, to end the Citywide enforcement designed to push houseless people out of sight. This City is for everyone. We cannot be a City that treats houseless people as less than human, unworthy to use our public spaces, like trash to be swept out of sight.

Houseless people are suffering on the streets due to police and other enforcers forcing them to sleep without tents or often even without blankets. Houseless people are losing all their property to the City taking and trashing it in violation of their rights. Houseless people are being kicked out of public space just for sitting, standing, being. Police records affirm this experience, showing a significant increase in enforcement of anti-houseless laws since January 2024 when you ended the initial "House 1000" initiative (see latest data [here](#)). And this is just tickets. The vast majority of enforcement is done through orders to move along - whether based in law or not.

These methods of forcing houseless people out of visible downtown, and surrounding areas are a continuation of racist exclusion enforcement that our nation claims to have ended. The United States has a long history of using mean-spirited and often brutal laws to keep "certain" people out of public spaces and consciousness. Jim Crow, Sundown towns, Anti-Okie laws, "Operation Wetback," and Ugly laws targeted various populations based on their racial, economic, social, immigration or disability status. Now no sleeping, no blankets, no standing, no sitting, no being in "closed areas" are being enforced against houseless people - disproportionately Black and Brown. If you appear houseless even just being seen standing or sitting on a public sidewalk is cause for police to move you along. In spite of the fact that 'loitering' on a public sidewalk is not a law in Denver, police are actively out enforcing this against houseless people. Just as Jim Crow laws of the past were used to segregate black people out of public spaces, this enforcement is there to push houseless people, especially Black and Brown and disabled, out of the public view.

The enforcement against houseless Denverites right now is causing serious harm and trauma to the community. Houseless people are now suffering without tents or blankets to protect them. In the words of one woman sleeping on the streets, "We are literally sleeping on the railroad tracks. We can't have nothing, we can't even have a blanket. Every time we get a tent or a blanket, police take it." Or as another woman stated, "[A year or two ago] we were allowed tents, we were allowed comfortability, we were allowed privacy, we were allowed stability at least a little bit. Now we are not allowed to have blankets underneath us or over us even to cover us at night." The hundreds of houseless people on our streets are being pushed into hiding where they face significant dangers including violence and rape. The dangers of being forced into more hidden areas cannot be over stated. With this increased enforcement, houseless people suffer even more from sleep deprivation as they are awoken by enforcers to move, or forced into areas where they must sleep with one eye open. This enforcement has even included organizations being told to stop serving food to houseless people, making houseless people suffer in hunger in a time of great food scarcity. In the words of another houseless person, "Everyday it gets harder and harder, because we got no shelter to be around us so we could be at peace or just quit. Everyday they come around like 6 clock, 7 o'clock and they throw all our stuff away." Facing this enforcement every day causes lasting trauma for the whole community.

As Mayor, you have the power and responsibility to end this terrorization of houseless people on our streets. You give direction to the Police. You are the one who declared areas where there were encampments "closed" after they were 'decommissioned.' You give direction to the Street Enforcement Team (SET) and ambassadors to patrol and move along houseless people. You can choose to stop telling enforcers to keep houseless people out of public spaces, to take down any visible tent, to stop using heavy force and intimidation to push houseless people just trying to survive, out of our City. We the undersigned organizations are asking for the sake of humanity that you use your power and authority to direct this inhumane, unlawful enforcement to end.

Sincerely,

American Civil Liberties Union

American Friends Service Committee

Basic Income Project

Bear Creek Alliance

Bread and Roses Legal Center

Buck Foundation

CD7 Watermelon

Colorado Freedom Fund

Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition

Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition

Colorado Poverty Law Project

Community United in Solidary with Palestine

Denver-Aurora Community Action Committee

Denver Democratic Socialists of America

Denver Communists

Denver Jewish Voice for Peace

Denver Task Force to Reimagine Policing and Public Safety

Elevated Denver

Empowerment Program

General Strike Denver

Harm Reduction Action Center

Housekeys Action Network Denver

Justice for the People

Mutual Aid Monday

National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty

Romero Theater Troupe

Transforming Our Communities Alliance

Together Denver

Warm Cookies of the Revolution

Western Regional Advocacy Project