

a discussion guide to



written by
Diane Nilan

HEAR US Inc.
January 2009

My Own Four Walls was originally produced by HEAR US in Naperville, IL in 2007. The 2009 edition of **My Own Four Walls**, including this discussion guide, was released by HEAR US in January 2009.

Support for **My Own Four Walls** was provided by The Aurora Foundation (now Community Foundation of the Fox River Valley), Enterprise Rent-A-Car Foundation, Legends of Basketball, Benedictine Sisters of Lisle, Naperville Noon Lions Club, Naperville Rotary Club, and many individual donors.

Immeasurable production and technical support was provided by Dr. Laura Vazquez, Department of Communication, Northern Illinois University, and her students.

For more information on **My Own Four Walls** please contact:

Diane Nilan

HEAR US Inc.

1163 E. Ogden Ave., 705-329

Naperville, IL 60563

Voicemail/fax: 630/225-5012

E-Mail: diane@hearus.us

Online: www.hearus.us

DVDs of the 2009 edition of **My Own Four Walls** are available for purchase at \$40 a copy (shipping/handling extra) on www.hearus.us. Bulk discounts available.

Credits (Life without My Own Four Walls, Life Filled with Benches)

Diane Nilan.....	Producer, Camera
Dr. Laura Vazquez.....	Director
Becca Berry and Gary Johnson.....	Editors
Nathan Britsch.....	Audio Post-Production
Ben Wahlund.....	Original Music Composer
Malika Green, Katie Wiegman.....	Music Performers
Barbara Duffield.....	Advisor
Design Resource Center.....	MOFW logo design

REACH: Connect Your Children to Education was written and produced by Diane Nilan, filmed and directed by Andrew McCormick, and funded by a grant from Cook County (IL) Sheriff’s Department, Women’s Justice Services. This film was narrated by LeeAnn Trotter of NBC-5 Chicago.

HEAR US gratefully acknowledges the wholehearted support received from organizations, schools, and most of all, from the courageous children, youth and families that made this production possible.

**HEAR US
Organization
Information**



HEAR US President/Founder: Diane Nilan Video Collaborator: Dr. Laura Vazquez, NIU, DeKalb, IL

HEAR US Board:

Helen Jilek, OSB, Benedictine Sisters, Lisle, IL
 Ken Johnson, Testech Ltd., Oswego, IL
 Marilyn McGowan, Community Volunteer, Aurora, IL
 Rita Sullivan, Community Volunteer, Carol Stream, IL
 Karen Turk, Consultant, Geneva, IL
 Pat Van Doren, It’s About the Children, Naperville, IL
 Nancy Wiersum, NCTV 17, Naperville, IL
 Maria Wilson, Financial Network, Naperville, IL

HEAR US Advisory Team:

Edgar Barens, Documentary Filmmaker, Aurora, IL
 Melanie Berrios, Outreach Specialist, Aurora, IL
 Diana Bowman, Serve/NCHE, Greensboro, NC
 Barbara Duffield, NAEHCY, Washington DC
 Ellie Nilan, Media Monitor, Atlanta, GA
 Patrick Perez, Kane Co. Sheriff, IL
 Dan Riefstahl, DJR Interactive, Erie, PA
 Erika Wilson, Youth Worker, Maywood, IL

MISSION STATEMENT: HEAR US, Inc. gives voice and visibility to homeless children and youth.

HEAR US is a 501(c)(3) organization. Donations to HEAR US are tax-deductible as allowed by law.
 DONATE SECURELY ONLINE at <http://www.hearus.us/donate.html> or by mail to HEAR US,
 1163 E Ogden Ave. #705-329, Naperville, IL 60563.
 vm/fax 630/225-5012 diane@hearus.us www.hearus.us

About My Own Four Walls

[*My Own Four Walls*](#) is a DVD collection of short documentaries depicting homelessness as experienced by children and teens in non-urban areas of the country. It was filmed and produced by [HEAR US Inc.](#), a national nonprofit organization dedicated to giving voice and visibility to homeless children, youth and families.

This “video visit” provides the venue for young homelessness experts—children and youth who have experienced living without a home—to share their challenges and their dreams, similar to over 1.5 million homeless young people in this country who typically remain invisible.

My Own Four Walls DVD contains several short selections, or chapters:

- “***My Own Four Walls***,” a 20-minute compilation of elementary, middle and high school students sharing their observations on homelessness.
- “***My Own Four Walls***” (educator series), Elementary, middle and high school segments (8 minutes each) featuring students talking about homelessness and education. Included are references to the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act.
- “***Life Filled with Benches***,” a short (13 min) inspiring glimpse of two teens on the streets of Harrisburg, PA.
- “***REACH: Connect Your Child to Education***,” a fast-moving 11-minute training film to guide parents, caretakers and professional in homeless children’s educational rights.
- Also, links to downloadable comprehensive discussion guide and study-action guide.

All who view these short documentaries will walk away with a deeper sense of how homelessness affects the invisible homeless population in communities nationwide. MOFW received the **2007 Outstanding Media Award from the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth** (www.naehcy.org).

Total Running Time: 73 minutes

Audience Focus

Educational: McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaisons, K-12 Educators/Administrators, Students (middle school and older), After-School Youth Programs Personnel, University Students and Education Professionals, Departments of Education, Social Work, Psychology, and Libraries.

Professional/Community: Shelter Personnel, Mental Health Agencies, Faith-based Organizations, Academic Researchers, Social Service Agencies, Law Enforcement Agencies, Health Care Providers, Government Child Welfare Agencies and Community Discussion Groups.

Homeless adults and children, incarcerated parents or caretakers of children of incarcerated parents

Methods of Viewing

Single Viewing: Selecting one of the chapters will provide substantial content to absorb. Educators may select the age-appropriate chapter containing the homeless education guidance.

The chapters:

- **My Own Four Walls** (20 min)
- **My Own Four Walls** (McKinney-Vento educator series): appx. 8 minutes each,
 - **Elementary**
 - **Middle School**
 - **High School**
- **Life Filled with Benches** (12 min)
- **REACH: Connect Your Child to Education** (11 min)

Using Viewers' discussion guide and/or study-action guide (PDF format) will greatly enhance the audiences' understanding of homelessness as experienced by children and youth. Guides are available on the HEAR US website, <http://www.hearus.us/projects/my-own-four-walls-video/dvd-guides.html>

Message to Viewers

Thanks so much for taking time to view these short documentaries. You will undoubtedly gain much knowledge and inspiration from your time spent watching and listening to these insightful children and youth who are often invisible.

It might be easy to neglect one crucial element of this production: *the amount of courage it took for each one of these amazing kids to step forth and participate in this project.*

Don't overlook that! And, in gratitude for their willingness to take this risk, I ask that each viewer do whatever you can to make the life/lives of homeless children and youth a little better.

HEAR US proudly gives voice and visibility to these young people with great hopes that we can work together to alleviate the conditions that devastate the lives of millions of children, youth and families in homeless situations. We invite your continued interest and support.

Diane Nilan, HEAR US President and Founder

Before Viewing

To prepare the viewers, an introductory discussion can help generate a more active learning experience. One way to jump-start a more active learning experience is to briefly discuss the following definition and statistics before viewing the video.

Homelessness, as described in this project means:

"... individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence... includes children and youth: sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; living in emergency or transitional shelters; abandoned in hospitals; awaiting foster care placement; those with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation; living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and migratory children who qualify as homeless because the children are living in circumstances described above..." (adapted from the U.S. Department of Education, McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act)

STATISTICS:

1. Families with children are by most accounts among the fastest growing segments of the homeless population. In the United States today, an estimated 1.35 million children are likely to experience homelessness over the course of a year (The Institute for Children and Poverty, 2004). This number represents two percent of all children in the United States, and ten percent of all poor children in the United States. Fact sheet #10, August 2007. National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH), www.nationalhomeless.org. (*HEAR US believes in 2009 easily over 1.5 million children/youth are now homeless.*)
2. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in the US Department of Justice's most recent study, published in 2002, reported there are an estimated 1,682,900 homeless and runaway youth. Fact sheet #13, August 2007. National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH), www.nationalhomeless.org.
3. Each time a homeless child changes school, an estimated 4-6 months of educational progress may be lost. "Homeless Education: Introduction to the Issue," Issue Brief, SERVE/National Center on Homeless Education, <http://www.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/introduction.pdf>.
4. One-half of homeless students will attend three different schools within a year. "Quick Facts," Institute of Children in Poverty, www.icpny.org
5. Over 20% of children/teens encounter the foster care system or are separated from their families during their homelessness. Research done by McClatchy Newspapers, using 2005 US Census data. http://rawstory.com/news/afp/In_US_record_numbers_are_plunged_in_02242007.html
6. The nation's poverty rate, 12.5% (2007), may reflect only half of the people who actually experience poverty. Additionally, an estimated 16 million people live in deep, or severe, poverty, which translates to an income of less than \$5,080 for a family of four. Experts believe that this segment of the population is extremely at risk of homelessness. The Urban Institute, http://www.urban.org/toolkit/fivequestions/McKernan_Ratcliffe.cfm
7. An estimated 1 million parents* are estimated be incarcerated. A significant number fall in the homeless/at risk of homelessness category, and an unknown number of their children become homeless once their custodial parent goes to jail. *Dept. of Justice, Bureau of Statistics. <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/>

VIEWING GUIDE

- ▶ ***My Own Four Walls*** (compilation, also applies to educator segments)
- ▶ ***Life Filled with Benches***
- ▶ ***REACH: Connect Your Child to Education***

IMPORTANT The audience should be prepared for the emotional impact of these films. These young spokespersons powerfully bring homelessness into the room and put faces and voices to an all-too-often invisible problem. Following the viewing, allowing time to first discuss personal reactions felt while viewing **My Own Four Walls** will be time well spent.

▶ ***My Own Four Walls***

INTRODUCTION

1. The introductory scenes introduce key facts about homeless families:
 - a. What is the estimate of how many children and youth are homeless? Is this number surprising?
 - b. How does the audience become prepared for the fact that this documentary will feature children? Why is that important?
2. What myths stand to be dispelled at the onset of this documentary?

GENERAL

1. The interval scenes show various settings from shelters, motels and soup kitchens. How do those scenes fit with your awareness of the world of homeless families?
2. Several scenes show motels: kids getting off school bus in front of motels in Las Vegas, piles of "stuff" in motel rooms, dilapidated motels, etc. Why would families turn to motels? What challenges would they face living in motels?
3. What different kinds of substandard housing are shown? What might cause people living in those places to be considered homeless?
4. One of the graphics in the film talks about the number of homeless families being at a level comparable to the Great Depression. Does this surprise you? Why/why not?
5. The pain caused by prejudice or judging homeless kids is real at all levels. How do the kids perceive the way some peers and adults value them? What can alleviate this prejudice?
6. The names of cities/towns and the map at the end convey the idea that homelessness exists across the entire nation. How does that compare with common perceptions?
7. What role does courage play in the lives of the young people in this film?
8. Life in shelters is described as troublesome by several of the children. What challenges would make living in homeless shelters difficult? What could be done to ease that discomfort?
9. How does the reality of homeless families fit/conflict with the American Dream?
10. What message(s) is (are) most important in this film? Why?

► My Own Four Walls, cont'd.**ELEMENTARY**

1. Tiffany describes her family's descent into homelessness. Identify the elements.
2. Jordan expresses some of his emotions about his entry into homelessness. What was on his mind?
3. Deshaud differentiates between poverty and homelessness. Do you agree with his assessment? Why/why not?
4. Despite their young age, these children have strong opinions about life in shelters and motels. How did they view their experiences?
5. Hunger is a by-product of homelessness and poverty. How does hunger and food insecurity affect homeless children? What potential solutions exist? What gaps in food security might they encounter?
6. Friends of homeless children/youth are valued for a number of reasons. What are they?
7. High mobility affects various aspects of the lives of homeless children. What are those issues?
8. Why would secrecy be important to kids in homeless situations?
9. Is the assessment of being regarded as having a "disease" a fair one for homeless kids to make? Why/why not?
10. What is the role of dreams in the lives of these young children? Why do you think they aspire to the professions they selected?

MIDDLE SCHOOL

1. Stevan, Melissa and Kourtlyn all entered homelessness in different ways. What were they?
2. Charmaine, Amanda, and Nicole express issues with living in a homeless situation. What were they and why do you think these issues bothered them?
3. Melissa has a solution for homelessness. What is her astute observation?
4. Amanda points out some common hardships for kids experiencing homelessness, including loss of friends. Kourtlyn describes the importance of friends. How does homelessness play havoc with kids' experiences of friendship?
5. Gabrielle introduces a concept people don't often think about: homeless kids participating in sports. Why is this important? What challenges might this pose to the homeless athletes and their teammates?
6. Jordan and Devon discuss the issue of school performance. How do their observations defy or confirm stereotypes? How might schools view homeless kids? Why?
7. Charmaine, Amanda, and Nicole talk about friends, dogs, and cats. Why might friends and pets play an even more important part in their pre-adolescent lives?
8. These kids share their lofty dreams. What might help them achieve these goals? What barriers might they encounter? What does their experience of homelessness contribute to reaching their dreams?
9. How does the average middle school students' sense of appreciation for home compare to Charmaine's description of her new home?
10. Ashley describes school as "like a home." Why might that be common for kids in homeless situations? What could enhance that experience? What obstacles might they encounter?

► *My Own Four Walls, cont'd.*

HIGH SCHOOL

1. Alternative schools play a significant role for teens on their own in homeless situations. Why might alternative schools be helpful? Harmful?
2. Chery explains her path to homelessness through the foster care system. Bethany said her mother hated her because "I was a bad kid, I guess." Brad describes problems at home and cops who said he had to leave home. Brianna tells of a fire at her family's rural home. How do these causes of homelessness contradict the generally accepted image of homelessness?
3. Alex, in rural Arkansas, matter-of-factly describes his mother's "ditching" her kids. What might be the cause of a parent's decision to do that? What challenges did he and his siblings face?
4. School is a valued opportunity to Beatrice, Nathan, and Katrina. How is their attitude different than some of their non-homeless peers?
5. Chery had significant reasons to drop out of high school. What were they? Ben's solution to hygiene and appearance issues reflects determination and ingenuity. What obstacles would teens in this situation commonly encounter?
6. Ashley, Nicole, and Carmechia talk about "stuff," and the difficulties that not having a place to live present to keeping personal possessions together. Brainstorm what those challenges would be to you. What items would be on the top of your list of things to keep? What would you be able to live without?
7. Bethany and Alex share their struggles with food insecurity, "things you don't think about" as a kid. Would food assistance be available to teens on their own in your community? How important is good nutrition?
8. The concept of secrecy and shame is raised by Nathan and Beatrice. Ben talks about keeping his homelessness a secret. Brad longed for someone to talk to, "even a teacher." What would motivate kids to keep their situation secret? What benefits/risks would sharing their secret with a trusted adult offer?
9. With few words, Brianna conveys the profound amount of stress she's experiencing. Beatrice assesses the difference between "who I was, 'homeless,'" and what had happened to her. How might the stress of homelessness yield some positive results? What would be needed to accomplish that?
10. Graduation represents an impressive accomplishment for Ben, Ashley, Paul, Beatrice, Nathan, and Katrina. What extraordinary efforts were needed for them to achieve this goal? What obstacles might occur for unaccompanied youth graduates wanting to attend college?

- **LIFE FILLED WITH BENCHES** (Ben and Chery share a glimpse of their lives on the streets)
1. The introductory graphics describe some of the perils of life on the streets for homeless unaccompanied youth (youth not under the care of parents or guardians). What makes street life so dangerous? What causes a youth to end up on the streets?
 2. Ben outlines some of the common prejudices that young black men (and other people of color) experience. Is he accurate? What other misconceptions exist? Are they fair?
 3. Chery describes her experience of abuse as a child. How common are such experiences?
 4. What protections/systems exist to help children/teens in this situation? Are they adequate?
 5. What would the high school experience be for students without a home? What resources exist to help? What barriers do a student's age present in your state?
 6. Chery talks about having a baby while being homeless. Discuss the additional burdens of a young teen going through pregnancy while living on the streets. What affect does separation have on the mother and the child?
 7. "Life Filled With Benches," the title of this chapter, refers to a comment made by Ben. What would some of the realities be for youth sleeping on benches?
 8. What would it be like for teens living under bushes on the edge of your downtown?
 9. Clothing and appearance are important issues for Ben and Chery, and most teens. What were the daily challenges to maintaining their appearance?
 10. Health issues, a reality for everyone, pose increased difficulties for teens living on the streets. What would some of those challenges be?
 11. Myths surrounding homelessness—all homeless people are drug addicts, thieves, liars, etc.—make it difficult for persons in homeless situations to attain independence. Why?
 12. Graduation seemed like an impossible goal for both Ben and Chery, yet both accomplished that milestone. Why do you think they pursued it? What happens to teens on their own who want to go to college?
 13. Cities under 100,000 are frequently overlooked in discussions about homelessness, much less in the distribution of government resources to address homelessness. What rationale is used for excluding smaller communities? Is it correct?
 14. Current economic issues (low wages, housing costs, etc.) provide barriers to self-sufficiency. What plan did Ben have to overcome those issues?
 15. Believing in yourself, according to Chery, was the strategy for getting through these difficult times. Why would that be important?
 16. Ben accepts the good parts of life on the streets—stars, the freshness that follows rain, knowing the streets like the back of his hand. How important is that attitude to survival?
 17. What next steps would face Ben and Chery as they move out of homelessness? What pitfalls await them once they are out?
 18. Chery pleads for viewers to not be selfish, to offer their help to people in homeless situations. Is that a reasonable expectation? Why/why not?
 19. With over 1.5 million children and youth experiencing homelessness in this country, what causes do you think contributed to this situation?
 20. What solutions would you offer to policymakers, community leaders and politicians?

► **REACH: Connect Your Child to Education** (an 11-min. training film to guide audiences, especially incarcerated parents, to educational rights if their children lose their home)

1. What would be typical difficulties regarding child care facing a parent upon incarceration?
2. What is the difference between "jail" and "prison" in the criminal justice system? Why are those differences significant for detained parents?
3. What arrangements need to be made, especially for a single-parent head of household, when that parent is arrested? What would cause a family's arrangements to fall apart when a parent is locked up?
4. What school challenges would children (with an incarcerated parent) encounter?
5. What benefits does school offer a student who has been displaced? Why would that be important?
6. Why is it important to clarify homeless students' educational rights? What key benefit(s) do these rights offer homeless students, parents and/or caregivers?
7. Why would a student or their family want to keep their homelessness a secret?
8. What role does school play in helping a student who becomes homeless because of an incarcerated parent? What is the role of the parent/caregiver?
9. "Homelessness" carries a stereotype. What is it, and how has your concept of homelessness changed following your viewing of this film?
10. What professionals in your community would benefit by seeing this video?

After Viewing

After viewing the video and answering the questions in the discussion guide, participants will be able to:

- Realize that behind the statistics on homelessness are human beings who have lost their place to live, including millions of children and youth.
- Recognize changes that a family goes through when they become homeless.
- Evaluate the effects of homelessness on family members and society.
- Recommend personal and policy activities and decisions to alleviate homelessness.
- Identify invisible homeless families and youth in communities across the nation.
- Understand and appreciate in a non-judgmental manner the different ways families and youth deal with emotional trauma, economic hardship, and mental illness that often accompany homelessness.
- Expand their perceptions on the plight of children and parents when the parent is involved with the criminal justice system.

More information:

[Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)

The Annie E. Casey Foundation has done a tremendous amount of work to support and promote effective responses to challenges posed to children and families of the incarcerated.

[National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth \(NAEHCY\)](#)

The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY), a national grassroots membership association, serves as the voice and the social conscience for the education of children and youth in homeless situations.

NAEHCY connects educators, parents, advocates, researchers and service providers to ensure school academic achievement and overall success for children and youth whose lives have been disrupted by the lack of safe, permanent and adequate housing. NAEHCY accomplishes these goals through advocacy, partnerships and education.

[National Center for Homeless Education \(NCHE\)](#)

Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, the National Center for Homeless Education is a national resource center of research and information enabling communities to successfully address the needs of homeless children and youth and their families. NCHE products include educational rights posters, parent brochures, the LEA Homeless Education Liaison Handbook, the State Coordinators' Handbook, and the NAEHCY listserv.

[National Center on Family Homelessness \(NCFH\)](#)

NCFH is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to developing long-term solutions to family homelessness. The Center is committed to: (1) building a rigorous knowledge base in the areas of family homelessness and poverty; (2) creating model programs, service demonstrations and technical assistance products; and (3) disseminating information to increase public awareness and improve national, state, and local policies and programs.

[National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty \(NLCHP\)](#)

NLCHP monitors and enforces compliance with the McKinney-Vento Act, providing technical assistance to attorneys, service providers, parents and educators across the country to ensure that homeless children gain access to public school. The NLCHP web site includes a self-advocacy kit, a flowchart for determining homelessness, reproducible Q&A booklets, and many other materials.

[National Network for Youth \(NN4Y\)](#)

The National Network for Youth is dedicated to ensuring that young people can be safe and lead healthy and productive lives. In doing so, young people are championed, especially those who because of life circumstance, disadvantage, past abuse or community prejudice have less opportunity to become contributing members of their communities.

[National Policy and Advocacy Council on Homelessness \(NPACH\)](#)

NPACH is dedicated to ending homelessness through grassroots advocacy and inclusive partnerships. NPACH works to accomplish its mission by educating the public and policymakers on the causes and consequences of homelessness, creating and advocating for appropriate federal policies in collaboration with local communities, connecting community-based organizations, schools, and work places to national anti-homelessness policy through advocacy and public education initiatives.

[U.S. Dept. of Education: Education for Homeless Children and Youths \(EHCY\) Program](#)

The U.S. Department of Education is the federal agency charged with the administration and oversight of the McKinney-Vento Act's Education for Homeless Children and Youths program.

[Youth Network](#)

Youth Network is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping people find youth programs and services in their communities.

Ways to Help:

LEARN about homelessness

HEAR US offers effective resources to help people learn more about homelessness—

► ***Crossing the Line: Taking Steps to End Homelessness*** (2005), Diane Nilan, 254 pgs., Booklocker.com, \$17.95 paperback, \$12 e-book. A reader-friendly book with stories and behind-the-scenes glimpses of homelessness at a suburban shelter.

► ***Where Can I Build My Volcano?*** (1999), Pat Van Doren, self-published, \$15. An award-winning children's book about a young girl and her mother who have lost their home.

► ***These and other resources may be found on the HEAR US website,***
<http://www.hearus.us>

VOLUNTEER to help local efforts

Shelters, soup kitchens, schools and advocacy agencies need volunteers. The National Coalition for the Homeless has an excellent fact sheet on the role volunteers can play in helping homeless people. <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/publications/facts/you.pdf>

SUPPORT programs working on solutions to homelessness

HEAR US provides a significant and an atypical service: ***giving voice and visibility to homeless children, youth and families***. This advocacy, or public awareness building, assists direct service agencies who often lack resources to engage in advocacy activities.

A perfect example of the need for advocacy: after achieving passage of the Illinois Education for Homeless Children Act of 1994, this tremendous law could have just sat on the books, unused, but a small group of advocates pushed for it to be enforced. This law became the cornerstone for today's federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act of 2002 (now up for reauthorization). Again, advocates worked hard to ensure compliance which benefits homeless kids nationwide. Grassroots support makes this advocacy possible.

By providing far-reaching opportunities for "voice and visibility" to eloquent young homeless spokespersons, countless children and teens will benefit from public education and other services, giving them the opportunity to become self-sufficient adults. Support for this work is deeply appreciated. More information may be found at www.hearus.us.

In addition to supporting [HEAR US](http://www.hearus.us), consider donating money or materials to agencies working on the issue of homelessness.

ADVOCATE to alleviate and end homelessness

Campaigns to improve policies that affect people in homeless situations always need constituents willing to contact their legislators. [HEAR US](http://www.hearus.us) has a "take action" section on their website that offers advocacy information and opportunities. It's a good place to start! HEAR US partners with like-minded national advocacy organizations. This collaboration has resulted in some impressive legislative victories. With your support, HEAR US commits to continue these essential efforts.