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## Testimony of Eric Tars, Senior Policy Director

### Resolution #240764 Condemning *Grants Pass v. Johnson* Decision

Philadelphia, PA City Council Hearing

September 26, 2024

My name is Eric Tars and I serve as the Senior Policy Director of the National Homelessness Law Center, where I helped to organize the national support for Gloria Johnson and her fellow homeless plaintiffs in the [Johnson v. Grants Pass](#) case at the Supreme Court, and I am also a proud Philadelphia resident.

In short, despite widespread understanding that everybody needs a safe place to sleep, the Supreme Court, in a shameful ruling in the tradition of *Plessy v. Ferguson* and *Korematsu v. U.S.*, excluded homeless people from the Constitution's protections against cruel and unusual punishment, giving cities a green light to segregate this [disparately Black and Brown](#), LGBTQ+, and disabled population, and [ticket, and arrest](#) them for surviving outside, even if there is no safe indoor place for them to be.

Councilmember Brooks' resolution makes clear: throwing homeless people in jail or fining them *makes homelessness worse*, and just because cities *can* do this, does not mean they *should*. Council must pass this resolution as a first step to take a stand against the Court's ruling and then must continue and do the right thing and focus on housing, not handcuffs; services not sweeps, as the proven solutions to homelessness.

In the city where the Declaration of Independence was authored, we must recognize that all people deserve to have their basic [human right to housing](#) met, not be arrested or ticketed because we've failed to ensure it. Please support Resolution #240764. Thank you.