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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Texas Homeless Network Stance on Panhandling**

**Austin, TX Thursday, May 15, 2020** -- Texas Homeless Network's focus is to provide a voice for those that are experiencing homelessness. Ordinances restricting panhandling or solicitation is an infringement of protected speech as well as arbitrary discrimination.

Texas Homeless Network is opposed to laws and ordinances that criminalize panhandling. For many individuals experiencing homelessness, soliciting donations or panhandling for income is the only way to obtain their basic necessities.

A study on panhandling by GLS Research<sup>1</sup> sheds light on the San Francisco's Union Square district where it is "reported that 94% of the money is used to purchase food. The survey also found 60% of panhandlers make \$25 a day or less." Not only that, but 70% of panhandlers would prefer a minimum wage job, but many felt they could not because of physical disability, mental illness, or lack of skills. 48% said they found panhandling degrading, while 43% enjoyed panhandling because it presents an opportunity to meet people.<sup>2</sup>

The best way to support these individuals is to support organizations that include their voices, advocate for their rights, and work to support them and bring them housing and other basic necessities. If you do not want to give money directly to the person, the best way to reply to panhandlers is to politely decline.

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<sup>1</sup> GLS Research (2013) Union Square Business Improvement District: Survey of Panhandlers in the Union Square Area. March. Mimeo. Private correspondence with Union Square Business Improvement District.

<sup>2</sup> Bose, Rohit, and Stephen W Hwang. "Income and spending patterns among panhandlers." CMAJ : Canadian Medical Association journal = journal de l'Association medicale canadienne vol. 167,5 (2002): 477-9.



Those experiencing homelessness face barriers to living, therefore Texas Homeless Network supports removing or preventing bans on panhandling or other forms of donation solicitation. Texans must stand against efforts to criminalize homelessness and work to make resources and housing available for all.

### **About Texas Homeless Network**

Texas Homeless Network has been working to end homelessness across the state of Texas since 1995. THN works hard to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring by coordinating community-level resources around the state, conducting research, and educating the public and lawmakers on issues around homelessness.