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### **Policy Position Paper**

Topic chosen: 4. Should the government guarantee housing for people who are homeless?

It is no secret that the overwhelming population of homeless people have increased drastically over the years. This ongoing crisis has first emerged in the 1870's and has worsened due to the high rise in unemployment, social related issues (discrimination against individuals of different ethnic backgrounds, race, religion, culture, and social status are major factors that lead to unemployment which can lead to homelessness), and global impacting disasters such as the Great Depression and COVID-19 have significantly impacted the world's economic state. When people think of the word "homelessness", often times, the very first thing they think of is "failure" or "filthy people who did not strive for greater things". However, we do not know the full story as to how people became homeless in the first place. Who are we to judge other fellow humans who may have experienced many hardships that have led them to their current situation? I believe that every individual should have an equal opportunity to redeem themselves and unlock their hidden potential to contribute to society in any means. Homeless people are no exception. In this paper, I will discuss why the government should provide housing for homeless people and the variety of housing programs that will benefit them and in turn contribute to society.

Although the concept of assisting homeless people by providing affordable housing and other services, we must remember that in order to accomplish this feat, the government must maintain their budget because the overall housing prices have drastically increased over the years

(Especially in major cities such as San Francisco and New York City). Fortunately, there are measures the government can take to ensure affordable options are created to cater to low-income families. These strategies include increasing permits for residential construction, incentivizing housing by offering developmental rights, subsidizing housing, requiring the market to include affordable housing. The government's top priority should be to care for its citizens and homeless people are certainly no exception. The problem with these housing program options are that these are long term projects rather than short term (in which the homeless population is in dire need of housing immediately). Studies have revealed that to tackle the homeless problem head on by providing a solid foundation for each homeless individual first is key in allowing them to recuperate from their life of stress and hunger. Providing a solid foundation encourages the homeless individuals to recover from ailments such as addictions, sicknesses, deterioration of their mental state, and other inflictions they may have encountered while living on the streets. Once they have a roof over their heads, this is where social programs provided by the government can be initiated to assist the ex-homeless population. Because they not have a solid foundation to reside in, they now have a proper address and the security of permanent housing. Since 2013, a few private organizations and cities have begun creating small, suitable houses built with quality materials at a low cost for homeless people all around. These houses are built without any of the unnecessary modifications that pricier houses have but is a perfectly safe and secure shelter. Theoretically, if these government funded tiny houses were built with the intention of leaving out all the luxury attachments such as air conditioning, full kitchens, full bathrooms, living rooms, bedrooms, laundry rooms and heating, these can significantly reduce the building costs, making it much more affordable for each homeless individual. To replace the kitchens, laundry rooms, and bathrooms, the government can build separate dining areas and laundry rooms specifically for these tiny house residents so they can still maintain their personal needs and maintaining their dignity of wearing clean clothes. The government has other methods of alleviating the homeless crisis as well. "The Office of Special Needs Assistance Program" is responsible for donating large sums of money to non-profit organizations that specialize in assisting homeless people (they range from youth, veterans, and

domestic abuse victims who have fled from their previous homes) with therapeutic services such as counseling and extracurricular activities that will support their mental and physical state. This program also supports those who are dangerously close to losing their homes due to foreclosure from their banks. As you can see, the government has been supporting homeless people by providing affordable housing and public housing shelters as well and other programs that encourage them to reevaluate their lives so they can obtain jobs and maintain a steady income.

In contrast to everything I said, I will discuss the reasons as to why the government should not provide costly programs such as building shelters, food stamps, therapeutic programs and other social welfare related things for the homeless. First and foremost, many people who pay their taxes and work an honest living job feel frustrated that their hard-earned money is going straight to supporting homeless people who they feel are lazy, unmotivated, substance addicted individuals who do nothing to contribute to the city they are forced to live in and simply take up space. By providing free of charge housing programs for homeless and low-income individuals, they will lack the motivation to strive for more in life and simply take it easy knowing that the government will provide their funds for things such as food, shelter, and other essentials we take for granted. Many people are drowning in responsibilities and do not make room for sympathy for the homeless population. They believe that they got themselves into their current situation and it simply is not the working class's fault. By providing everything the homeless requires to live, the government is actually making the homeless crisis worse. It sounds contradictory, but subsidized housing programs funded by the government has become poor people's main incentive to "become" homeless. After all, who wouldn't want to live in a free house funded by tax dollars. Housed people may argue that if we cater to the homeless' every need without having them fend for themselves just like the rest of us, we are molding an unhealthy mindset for the homeless and condition them into thinking "by being unproductive, I can expect the government to provide everything I need to survive because I am a human". By having this mindset, they lose the drive to improve themselves and actually contribute to society. Although the result of them being homeless is sometimes not their fault, some have ended in up in their

situation simply by refusing to work which leads to being evicted. Obtaining a low-wage job is easy enough as there are multiple hiring signs plastered all over the city. The lazy homeless people have no excuse to not work. This is assuming these are perfectly capable of working people who simply do not want to work. Many can agree that it is a waste of our tax dollars to fund these programs to help lazy individuals. Another reason why governments should not support the homeless is because of the overwhelming number of drug and alcohol addicts. By enabling this sort of behavior with funding, we are unwittingly encouraging them to damage their bodies with harmful substances, rather than putting them into rehabilitation facilities. In conclusion, I for one am an advocator for helping the homeless in any way possible. I fully support the government and other non-profit organizations to create affordable housing for homeless people to reside in and (hopefully) get jobs to support themselves and transform their lives for the better. I respect the organizations who have exerted massive amounts of time and energy to care for other fellow human beings via soup kitchens and charities. During these cruel and harsh times, with a plethora of disasters plaguing our world, it warms my heart knowing that there are people with a pure heart who wish to make a difference for others and I wish to do the same.

#### **References:**

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