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TO: The Honorable Detroit City Council

FROM: David Whitaker, Director
Legislative Policy Division Staff 

DATE: January 28, 2025

RE: **MEMO AND RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE BILL OF RIGHTS FOR THE HOMELESS ACT**

City Council Member Angela Whitfield-Calloway has requested the Legislative Policy Division (LPD) to produce a brief summary and resolution in support of the Bill of Rights for the Homeless Act.

Attached is the requested resolution. Please let us know if we can be of further assistance.

Brief Summary

If passed, the Michigan House Bill 4919, also known as the “Bill of Rights for the Homeless Act,” would establish a Bill of Rights for Michigan’s homeless population and provides consequences for violations of those rights. The bill was introduced by Representative Emily Dievendorf (77th District – Lansing) and referred to the Economic Development and Small Business Committee in July 2023. In December 2024, the Committee postponed the bill temporarily for further consideration. Because this bill did not pass during the previous legislative session, the legislature will have to reintroduce the bill before it can be considered again.

To date, a Homeless Bill of Rights has been passed in Rhode Island (R.I. Gen. Laws § 34-37.1-3-eff.2012), Connecticut (Public Act No. 13-251-eff.2013), and Illinois (775 ILCS 45/10-eff.2013), and Puerto Rico (Laws of Puerto Rico §1006c - Declaration of the rights of the homeless-eff.2007).

In May 2023, New York City Council and a Public Advocate passed a local law (Local Law No. 62 of 2023, Council Int. No. 190-A of 2022), creating a Homeless Bill of Rights for the City of New York.

Will the Bill Improve the Quality of Life for the Detroit Homeless Population?

The quality of life for the Detroit Homeless population would likely see a significant improvement if the bill is passed. Homeless individuals would receive equal treatment by all State and municipal agencies regardless of their housing status (i.e., having or not having a fixed or regular residence, including status of living on the streets, in a shelter, or in a temporary residence). They would be better able to exercise their voting rights, have stronger disclosure, confidentiality privacy and privacy protections, access to emergency medical care, school enrollment and the ability to move freely in public places.

Will the bill have a negative impact on municipal operations/finances?

Although there are many factors to consider, the fiscal impact on the City’s costs and revenues is ultimately indeterminate if the bill passes.

On the positive side, the City could receive more income and property tax revenue from homeless individuals obtaining employment. Ensuring that more homeless individuals can vote in City, State, and National elections will have a positive effect on democracy. Overall human health and well-being could improve due to more homeless individuals having access to emergency medical care. The revenue for the Detroit Public Schools Community District could increase from the homeless youth being able to enroll in schools. The homeless youth could also participate in Detroit youth programs and obtain employment. Additionally, the State of Michigan may release any additional funds related to handling the plight of the City’s homeless population.

On the negative side, there could be an increase in the costs of operations due to an increase in homeless individuals utilizing City services to the extent that they were unable to before. The operational costs for the Detroit Public Schools Community District could increase from the increase in school enrollment. The fiscal impact on local courts is indeterminable since the number of lawsuits that may arise, and corresponding outcomes are unknown.

A Resolution by Council Member Angela Whitfield-Calloway

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF BILL OF RIGHTS FOR THE HOMELESS ACT

- WHEREAS** The Detroit City Charter obligates the City to “provide for the public peace, health and safety of persons and property within its jurisdictional limits” and states that the City “has an affirmative duty to secure the equal protection of the law for each person and to insure equality of opportunity for all persons;”¹ and
- WHEREAS** In 2023, Michigan Representative Emily Dievendorf sponsored House Bill 4919, also known as the “Bill of Rights for the Homeless Act;” and
- WHEREAS** The bill seeks to provide homeless individuals with the same rights and privileges as any other citizen in Michigan and to prohibit the denial or abridgment of an individual’s rights, privileges, or access to public services solely because the individual is, or is perceived to be, homeless; and
- WHEREAS** Under the bill, individuals experiencing homelessness would have the following rights without discrimination based on their current housing status: the right to move freely in public spaces, the right to equal treatment by all state and municipal agencies, the right to freedom of employment discrimination based on lack of permanent mailing address or the address of a shelter or social service provider, the right to emergency medical care, the right to vote and receive necessary documentation to prove identity for the purpose of voting, protection from disclosure of records or information provided to a shelter or social services provider, reasonable expectation of privacy, and the right for homeless youth to be enrolled in school without discrimination or delay; and
- WHEREAS** On January 31, 2024, the City of Detroit, Detroit Continuum of Care (CoC), and the Homeless Action Network of Detroit (HAND) completed a one-time count and identified a population of 1,725 homeless people in the cities of Detroit, Hamtramck, and Highland Park, which demonstrates an increase of 16% from 2023;² and
- WHEREAS** Many individuals experience homelessness due to economic hardship, a severe shortage of safe and affordable housing, and a shrinking social safety net; by explicitly prohibiting discrimination, the bill may remove barriers related to accessing housing and reduce amount of time that people experience homelessness; and
- WHEREAS** Unfortunately, the Michigan legislature did not pass the bill through either chamber during the previous congressional session, and it will have to be reintroduced before the legislature can take them up again; and
- WHEREAS** The Detroit City Council recognizes that individuals experiencing homelessness are entitled to the same dignity, respect, and rights as any other individual regardless of their housing status; **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT,**

¹ 2012 Detroit City Charter, Declaration of Rights

²<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5344557fe4b0323896c3c519/t/66f1cc70e2ea465a37bc7018/1727122544657/PIT+2024+Summary+Final+.pdf>

RESOLVED Councilmember Angela Whitfield Calloway and the Detroit City Council hereby strongly encourages the Michigan legislature to reintroduce and pass the Bill of Rights for the Homeless Act, previously known as Senate House Bill 4919; **NOW BE IT FINALLY**

RESOLVED That the Detroit City Clerk provide a copy of this resolution to the Detroit delegations of both the Michigan State House and Senate, in addition to Governor Gretchen Whitmer.