



## Disabled People of Color Will Suffer From Criminalization of Homelessness

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San Marcos is set to be the latest city in San Diego County to make homelessness a criminalized offense, adding to the growing list of cities that punish people for struggling to survive in an increasingly unaffordable state. As the state of California acknowledges Disability Pride Month through a series of webinars on disability discrimination, it's crucial to note that this decision will exacerbate discrimination against disabled people, particularly those who are Black, LGBTQIA2S+ and/or survivors of domestic violence, who already represent a significant portion of San Diego's homeless population.

Homelessness can result from losing income or being unable to work due to a disability, but it can also cause or worsen physical and mental disabilities like serious mental illnesses and substance use disorders. At least 25 percent of unhoused people are considered "seriously mentally ill," and homelessness can exacerbate their symptoms, which often go untreated due to lack of health care access. Instead, these individuals — especially those with serious mental illnesses — frequently encounter police and courts rather than receiving needed health care or services. Criminalizing homelessness does not address these underlying health issues; it merely punishes those already facing severe challenges.