

REUTERS/JONATHAN ERNST

## An open letter to the President of the United States

**D**ear Mr. President, governors and local mayors of the United States:

By now, I'm sure you may have heard that Portland, Seattle, Los Angeles and the state of Hawaii have all declared states of emergency for housing and homelessness in their communities.

Portland, Seattle, Los Angeles and Hawaii, like many communities in the United States, are dealing with

thousands of men, women, children and elders sleeping outside without a safe place to call home.

For decades local communities have been asked to carry the majority of the burden of solving homelessness in their communities. While we appreciate efforts to support ending veterans homelessness and investments made by local, state and federal governments to support homeless and mental health services and housing opportunities, we have failed as a nation to give our citizens the tools they need to be successful in life. The disinvestment in federally supported housing in the United States has been well documented in the past 30-plus years.

For far too long local communities have been forced to answer the question – why should we invest more in housing? In many cases, the people have responded. Just last week, both San Francisco, Calif., and Kalamazoo, Mich., voted to give their neighbors experiencing homelessness and poverty a fighting chance by supporting more revenue options at the ballot to support housing and homelessness services.

In Portland and in Multnomah County we've declared a state of emergency. We are committed to helping shelter all individuals and families, while working to create more housing to support an overwhelming need in our communities. These efforts take real investments. We need your help.

We do not pretend to speak for our colleagues in other cities, but we do know that local governments, residents and advocates are taking action. We have no choice.

With wages lagging and the cost of housing skyrocketing in many communities around the country, hundreds of thousands of people continue to find themselves without a place to call home. There doesn't appear to be an end in sight.

Watching cities up and down the West Coast declare states of emergency for homelessness and housing should be a rallying cry to our state and federal government to support our efforts.

Knowing that local communities are now taking action by declaring emergencies, we ask you, Mr. President and governors across the country, to

consider executive actions within your capacity to help local communities – rural and urban alike – restore lost housing and billions of dollars in lost revenue to help support American citizens in having a safe place to call home.

Without state and federal intervention, unfortunately, even with the best of intentions we fear we will not be able to scale up our investments to solve the problem of homelessness and to give individuals and families a safe place to call home.

**Watching cities up and down the West Coast declare states of emergency for homelessness and housing should be seen as a rallying cry to our state and federal government to support our efforts.**



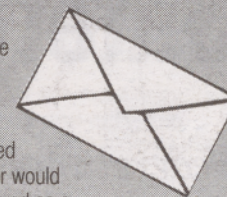
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By Israel Bayer

Israel Bayer is the executive director of Street Roots. You can reach him at [israel@streetroots.org](mailto:israel@streetroots.org) or follow him on Twitter @israelbayer.

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If you would like to have something that you've written published in our pages, or would like to get involved as a member of our reporting staff, contact Managing Editor Joanne Zuhl at 503-228-5657, [joanne@streetroots.org](mailto:joanne@streetroots.org). We ask that all submissions include the author's name and contact information, if available.



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