

Health Funders for Housing Justice



August 12, 2025

Attending: Blair Harvey (Michael Reese Health Trust), Emily Metz (Michael Reese Health Trust), Josh McGowan (Circle of Service Foundation), David Spatz (UniHealth Foundation), Addy Matney (Piedmont Health Foundation), Gerardo Benavides (Horizon Foundation), Brittney Daniel (California Community Foundation), Tameeka Christian (JB & MK Pritzker Family Fund), Mindy Silva (SAC Health Foundation), Alexis Basgil (United Way of Broward County), Akshara Vivekananthan (HealthSpark Foundation), Kathy Smith (Partners for Health Foundation), Arpita Jindani (Grantmakers In Health), Rebecca McGuire (United Way of Broward County), Emma Hertz (HealthSpark Foundation), Nancy Kelley (Missouri Foundation for Health)

Staff: Michael Durham, Jessica Vanegas, Maegan Scott, Joshua Perrin

Guest: NA

Regrets: Roweena Naidoo, Divya Mohan Little, Kristina Gray Akpa, Daniel Bouton, Michelle Schneidermann

Agenda:

- I. Welcome | Introductions
- II. Logistics | Announcements
 - o [Beyond Do No Harm Resistance Lab](#) TODAY at 6ET
 - o [Monthly Policy Call](#): tomorrow!
 - o [Sep 3 webinar on Medicaid and homelessness](#) with GIH!
 - o [Foundations for Liberation](#): Applications open later this month
 - o [Homebase convening on older adult homelessness](#)
 - o [International Drug Policy Reform Conference](#): Nov 12-15, Detroit
- III. Discussion: Executive Order on Forced Treatment to Address Homelessness
- IV. Closing | Next steps
 - o Next meeting is October 14

Notes:

Michael initiated the meeting with a round of introductions, welcoming newcomers Emily Metz, Gerardo Benavides, Mindy Silva, and Nancy Kelley! Michael promoted Funder's Together's upcoming [events](#), in addition to related sessions by Interrupting Criminalization, Homebase, and the Drug Policy Alliance.

Michael set up discussion on the July 24th executive order by summarizing its central tenets. He remarked that while it is still useful to home in on the details and where room for interpretation exists, we recognize that the Administration bears little regard for court rulings or any legal obstacles to their objectives, which leaves minimal recourse for legal challenges. It is essential that we hold clarity on the ideology and intentions behind the Executive Order notwithstanding its minutia: it is rooted in a racist dehumanization of people living in poverty and homelessness that dangerously conflates "crime" and "disorder" with housing deprivation. The EO frames its premise

in compassion for people who are homeless and misleadingly names the truth that billions have been spent on homelessness without addressing root causes, but its actions propagate carceral approaches that will only exacerbate homelessness.

We discussed the implications bearing upon our group's distinct focus at the intersection of housing and healthcare justice, namely the expansion of involuntary commitment and forced treatment, what [some call](#) *psychiatric incarceration*. It was noted that this EO is not about funding cuts per se: it will redirect funding from housing and homelessness programs to the criminal-legal system and certain HHS/behavioral health programs. While coerced substance use and mental health treatment is ineffective and inhumane, one wonders whether new funding through SAMHSA grants could be covertly repurposed for effective means, like expanding civilian crisis responses programs like [CAHOOTS](#).

Participants shared how other funders and advocacy groups in their respective regions may be aligned on the harmful ideology behind the order, but still grasp for interim solutions to street homelessness and encampments en route to expanding permanent housing. We recalled this group's previous conversation about so-called sanctioned encampments, which the National Health Care for the Homeless Council describes as [temporary supported communities](#), and the importance of nuance: in a sense, they share many of the same characteristics of the dangerous detention camps we expect from the Administration, but when offered voluntarily and resident-governed, safe-sleeping sites such as these camps remain a better option for many compared to shelters or other outdoor locations. As a broader homelessness advocacy and housing justice community, we do need clearer talking points on "interim" options to mitigate encampments that are rooted in justice, dignity, and best practices.

Drawing discussion to a close, Michael reflected advice from a national harm reduction organization he follows that has chosen to remain quiet in the wake of the executive order to avoid scrutiny from the Feds while covertly working with what partners remain in agencies like SAMHSA on how they interpret and implement the order, in addition to a focus on state and local advocacy. Local and regional work may have always been the best advice, but it certainly merits prioritization these days.

Health Funders for Housing Justice's next meeting is October 14th.