

Jim Ferry, Vice Chair; Miriam Huertas, Sr. Vice President
Allentown Chamber of Commerce Allentown Chamber of Commerce

As you are aware, there is a proposed ordinance going before Allentown City Council on October 14, 2020 to establish a Homelessness Bill of Rights.

This proposed legislation is legally questionable and very concerning for several reasons. If approved, this bill of rights will create all kinds of health and safety concerns, impact the rights of every business owner in Allentown, and completely change the quality of life in our City.

This Homelessness Bill of Rights would give every person in Allentown the right to, among other things:

- Lie down or sleep, individually or in groups, in public spaces, including sidewalks, parks, public transportation and buildings
- Urinate and defecate and in public locations, such as parks and buildings
- Sleep in self-erected shelters or tents on private property with the owner's permission
- Panhandle in public spaces

The Allentown business community is very empathetic to social service issues and the well-being of our city as a whole. Our opposition to this particular bill of rights does not equal a lack of support for the homeless in our community. This bill is simply not a reasonable or forward-thinking proposal as it is written.

After reviewing the proposed Bill and taking a vote of the Allentown Chamber Board of Directors, we oppose this bill as written.

We encourage the Allentown Commission on Homelessness and other social service professionals to continue addressing the needs of our homeless population with goal of developing a good quality solution that benefits all the stakeholders in the City of Allentown.

A draft of the proposed legislation is attached.

Sincerely,

Kevin Post

Please do not approve this Bill. It does not reflect the wants and needs of the residents and business owners in Allentown. This bill would only cause more stresses on emergency and medical services. Thank you for your consideration.

Donald Bernhard

Executive Director, Downtown Allentown Community Development Initiative

A question about the Homeless Bill of rights proposed legislation.

Has the City Solicitor reviewed it?

For starters I'm curious where the legal authority is derived for the City to grant rights to the homeless or anyone else.

Assuming there is such authority ,which I doubt, two more specific legal questions occur to me:

- Do these "rights" supersede other city ordinances? To note just one example, there are numerous rules around accessory dwellings and people living in yards. Are those rules now repealed by these new "rights"
- Since the City is now declaring that everyone has a "right" to housing, can someone sue the city if that promise is not delivered to their satisfaction? A corollary question is who do these "rights" extend to? If a homeless person moves here from Philadelphia do they immediately have a "right" to housing courtesy of the city which legislated this right?

Michael J. Stoudt, Jr. CPA, business owners and residents

Good evening,

My wife and I are both business owners in the city of Allentown. My wife owns Gallery 840, an art gallery located in the Butz Corporate Center next to Billy's. I own a CPA firm on the second floor of Butz Corporate Center. We also are residents of the city. We downsized our home in North Whitehall Township and moved to Strata West.

We love working and living in the city, except for the horrible crimes of annoyance - the loud cars, the panhandling and loitering at the 7-11 at 7th and Linden, the trash and filth left behind there, etc.

My wife has had homeless people yell at her in the gallery and scream at her because she doesn't provide access to restrooms. The Butz Corporate Center has had to lock their elevators because homeless people entered the building and wandered around asking for money.

We are all sympathetic to the difficulties of the homeless. However, the quality of life in the city will drastically decline if this bill is passed. And we are not permanently fixed in the city, we can move out just as easily as we moved in. We want to invest our time, talent and treasure here, but it must be a good place to invest. This bill will make the city less likely to attract investment, less likely to attract tax paying residents, and less likely to actually benefit the homeless in the long run.

We strongly oppose this bill.

Dave Bhasin, 1776 Central Park, Orefield, PA 18069

Dear Mayor and City Council: I just read the proposed ordinance pertaining to the plight of homeless individuals in the city, and how your administration is looking to handle it. There are many rights listed in the proposed ordinance that make sense, especially when those rights apply to any one who has a home anyway. However, there are many parts of your proposal that are very disturbing. Here's my understanding of what is being proposed:

This Homelessness Bill of Rights would give every person in Allentown the right to, among other things:

- Lie down or sleep, individually or in groups, in public spaces, including sidewalks, parks, public transportation and buildings
- Urinate and defecate and in public locations, such as parks and buildings
- Sleep in self-erected shelters or tents on private property with the owner's permission
- Panhandle in public spaces

We are a tax payer in the city of Allentown, and for our business there, your city charges us the highest real estate and other nuisance taxes we've seen in over a dozen municipalities we operate in. And, when I read this proposed ordinance, it reminded me of the conditions found in San Francisco, where walking the sidewalks would find needles, feces, urine, panhandlers, home made tents or sleeping bags or blankets next to buildings, etc. The conditions found in San Francisco are pathetic, and to bring those poorly managed issues to our city makes no sense.

I am empathetic to the plight of those who find themselves without a home or choose to do so voluntarily due to mental, health or other conditions. I think with community and religious organizations' involvement, and with the city's social services, along with any state or federal funds that can be mustered, those who find themselves on the street should be helped, but not like this ordinance proposes. The homeless need our support and protection. But, to allow the homeless to become a nuisance by loitering and defecating/urinating in the streets, and creating a very negative image of the city does not help any one. You need the city to be an inviting place for those living in the city, suburbs and other nearby cities to come spend an evening, enjoying shopping, sports, restaurants and entertainment. Your proposal will definitely keep visitors away. I hope you will find other solutions for those who need help. If you want to develop public rest rooms in the city, and keep them clean for every one's use, that is something that many cities in Europe and the world provide their citizens and visitors.

I hope you will consider alternatives to your proposed "Bill of Rights".

Kirk A. Nagle
Direct Response Associates, Inc.
1544 W. Hamilton Street, Suite 202

I am against the Homeless Bill of Rights proposal

Joe Colasuonno

My name is Joe Colasuonno and I am a local property owner downtown in Allentown. I was sent the following link in an email.

I wanted to reach out to express my disapproval for this type of ordinance. I believe Allentown has made so many great strides towards a better way of life and better community for its constituents over the last decade, and I think something like this will quickly decimate all the progress that has been made thus far.

I would hope leadership in the city would be able to foresee how an ordinance like this would be terrible for the community and all of the residents.

Janet Gross, 2804 W. Gordon St.

Please see that this information is given to all the Allentown city council members.

As a resident of the West End of Allentown living in close proximity to the Malcolm Gross Rose Garden and Cedar Creek Parkway, I am quite opposed to the proposed Section 180C.05 of the Administrative Code as it is written.

Our parks close at dusk — no one, homeless or otherwise, is permitted to sleep in the parks at night.

Many of the city parks' restrooms have been closed due to vandalism, or inability to maintain them properly, therefore, persons who are using the parks as their residence are forced to urinate and defecate on the ground or in the bushes or on the benches or on nearby private property. This is the case with the Arts Park, which has NO restroom facilities, so the vagrants urinate and defecate on the Baum School of Art property. I am a member of the board of the Baum School and this is a habitual problem. Vagrants in the Arts Park use dangerous drugs and leave their paraphernalia where it is a hazard to everyone, especially to the children who take classes there.

Public urination and defecation is a serious health problem, even when we are not in the midst of a pandemic. Open defecation is an important factor that causes various diseases, the most common are diarrhea and intestinal worms, but also typhoid, cholera, hepatitis, and others.

Although the sidewalks don't close at night, it would be hazardous to allow people to sleep there at night, it would also be hazardous during the day, as it would block a public thoroughfare.

While I think panhandling should be completely disallowed, court cases have upheld that it is a form of free speech, however the city should strictly limit it to passive panhandling during daylight hours, for the safety of everyone involved in the transaction.

Which public buildings does the ordinance refer to ? Does it allow the homeless to congregate in City Hall, Lehigh County Government Building, Lehigh County Courthouse, the Art Museum, the Public Library? While many buildings are open to the public, they are still private property and the owners have a right to restrict access for the safety of patrons who are using the building for its intended use, not as a substitute for housing.

Housing is a basic human right; the homeless should be given access to emergency, transitional, or permanent housing. They have a right to receive medical care without discrimination, especially access to needed medications. Nationally, about a quarter to a third of the homeless have a serious mental illness, usually schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or severe depression. Rather than pass this troubling bill of rights, establish enough shelters to house all of the city's homeless and keep everyone else healthy and safe.

It is the duty of city government, or any government for that matter, to keep its citizens safe. If this ordinance is allowed to pass, the safety of both the homeless population and the tax-paying residents will be compromised.

Don Ringer just called and said he opposed the proposal using very strong terms of opposition.

Peter Kareha

I would like to express my sincere concern about CeCe Gerlach's proposed Homelessness Bill of Rights and the effect it will have on Allentown's future.

Allentown's park system is one of its greatest assets. As a lifelong resident of Allentown, it is one of the features I love most about Allentown. I believe this proposal from CeCe Gerlach will be detrimental to the parks and our residents' and visitors' ability to enjoy the parks.

I believe further focus and support of the social programs to aid the homeless (shelter, food pantry, etc) would be the better investment than siphoning the value of our park system for a short term gain.

Cheryl A. Haughney, 1231 W. Walnut St.

Dear Mayor O'Connell, City Council Members,

There are several points to the proposed amendment that are cause for concern and clarification:

1. Lying down, sleeping or resting...not be limited to public sidewalks, public parks, public transportation, and public buildings...**Does this mean people may now sleep on sidewalks, in bus terminals? Millions of dollars have been invested and continue to be invested in Allentown to improve outdoor esthetics. The City's Economic Development arm continues to entice businesses to our City. Surely, the outward appearance of the City is a consideration for commerce entities to locate here.**

2. ...the opportunity to perform basis (sic) needs, such as to defecate, urinate, and to access clean water and other living necessities, in public locations and facilities, which includes public parks and buildings, with dignity and relative privacy under hygienic circumstances and conditions...**This language will likely be construed as permission to defecate and urinate in public anywhere, anytime. Such behaviors are a threat to the health and well being of all citizens. In my neighborhood near the Library we experience problems with the guests of neighbors (not homeless) urinating in the alleys. I've witnessed this disgusting behavior. The smell lingers and is beyond "unpleasant". Certainly, this is a health issue.**

3. The Right to sit, rest or sleep...or a self-erected shelter (e.g. a tent) on private property with the owner's permission...of person's and their pets..**This language allows for camping on front, side and rear of private property. We have enough challenges in our neighborhoods with residents not keeping their properties and sidewalks clear of debris and animal feces. My neighbors and I place several calls a month to Trash/Recycling/Animal Control. Now we want to permit "camping" ?? Where will the refuse go? Where will the "campers" defecate, urinate and bathe? Many of the residents in my neighborhood unfortunately, do not act responsibly with regard to proper and timely disposal of trash. This part of the proposed amendment will only burden already challenged neighborhoods. I'm sure the neighbors in our wealthy**

West End won't be happy when one of their neighbors decides to allow homeless persons and animals to "camp" on lawns. And how do we define "pets"? What about "emotional support animals" which are not "pets"? A pot-bellied pig is not permitted in the City except if the pig is an emotional support animal. This amendment would permit farm animals to "camp" on private property.

Clearly, there are unanswered questions and concerns. Further discussion is needed.

Please vote "no".

Harry Crapser, 1522 ½ Chew Street

Dear Mayor O'Connell, City Council Members:

For more than ten years I have been a litter patrol volunteer in the West Park area. Every week, three times a week, Winter, Summer, Spring and Fall, I go around several blocks in our area picking up litter on the sidewalks and curbs, collecting on average thirty bags of trash per month to keep our neighborhood clean and enhance the quality of life in the City of Allentown.

When I read the proposed ordinance establishing a Homelessness Bill of Rights, I was shocked, finding the proposed sections and language hard to believe.

1. Lying down, sleeping or resting...not be limited to public sidewalks, public parks, public transportation, and public buildings...**this seems unsafe and disruptive of pedestrians on the streets, children walking to school, or people walking in our beautiful parks. It is not the way to make progress after the investment of substantial public and private outlays to improve our City.**
2. ...the opportunity to perform basis (sic) needs, such as to defecate, urinate, and to access clean water and other living necessities, in public locations and facilities, which includes public parks and buildings, with dignity and relative privacy under hygienic circumstances and conditions...**we already have observed individuals urinating and defecating in the alley behind our house. It appears that this ordinance would further encourage these unsanitary practices, spreading disease, making our City unlivable.**
3. The Right to sit, rest or sleep...or a self-erected shelter (e.g. a tent) on private property with the owner's permission...of person's and their pets...**we have safety ordinances and zoning codes to ensure that living spaces meet basic requirements for health and safety of residents. Any progress that has been**

achieved to date, would be negated by the deterioration resulting from the consequences of approval of this proposal.

I sincerely oppose the adoption of such an ordinance.

Daysell Ramirez, 691 Dixon St.

I am an advocate of human rights and living in an inclusive city where all citizens thrive. With that said, the proposed Homeless Bill of Rights is a bandage and not a well-thought-out solution. Our homeless community needs better community services that provide basic needs, including shelter, food, medical, and life goal plans to attain permanent housing and financial independence. This bill's passing will be a deterioration of our city and more harmful to our homeless population. Moreover, there is a major risk that their needs will no longer be addressed as there will not be a real urgency to follow city rules and regulations that consider all citizens and businesses alike.

Ruth & Alex Torok, 123 N. Broad Street

Dear Mr. Hanlon

The Proposed Bill No. 2020, Article 180.05C is not the correct way to address the issue of homelessness in Allentown.

We encourage you to inform the members of Allentown City Council that we do NOT SUPPORT this measure.

Scott Knappenberger, Pizza Mart

I talked more to my wife about this and she is also upset.

Some folks already have a bad opinion of downtown Allentown & this would make it worse. Imagine how unsafe women feel being approached, by someone who may be harmless, and this doesn't make things any better.

What about the people who come to the Arena once it's reopened, most of these are decent people looking for a night out with their spouse or families.

Aside from people feeling unsafe, this will deter people from downtown which will be detrimental to business owners like us.

I hope the council takes all this under serious consideration.

Kim Blatt
525 North Glenwood Street

I oppose this bill period. Where is the compassion for tax payers who will pay for this with lost revenue, filthy streets and lawlessness. Shame on you for even considering passing such measures.

Regina Harris, 216 N. Broad St.

Dear Mr. Hanlon: As a lifelong resident of the city of Allentown (87 years), the comment "Allentown has a beautiful park system" was always music to my ears. Although perhaps well-intentioned by the council person proposing this Bill of Rights, it is ill thought out. I walk Cedar Park every day, weather permitting. The corona virus has put many more people out there walking, which is a good thing, but I see nothing to be gained by the destruction of our park system by the "right to urinate, defecate" and whatever else is called for in this so-called "Bill of Rights". I urge Council and the Mayor to think this one through seriously. Thank you

Denise L. Kowitz, MBA, ChFC®, LUTCF; Vice President | Operations
CAPTRUST | STRATEGIC ADVISOR GROUP | 600 Hamilton Street, Suite 900 |

Dear Mayor and City Council Members,

One of the many reasons our company chose to become tenants in Tower 6 in downtown Allentown was due to the revitalization that is taking place in the city. I am truly concerned that the bill of rights listed below would be detrimental to that revitalization. Although, I certainly empathize with the plight of the homeless – there has to be better solutions in helping them other than what this bill suggests. I strongly urge that the bill, in this fashion, should not be instituted and that you work to find that better solution. Passing this would certainly not contribute to the growth of business in the city and potentially could force those already working downtown to leave. The COVID pandemic has also caused businesses to think differently about their future – moving more towards remote working opportunities. This could also potentially be a limiter of business growth in Allentown.

Again, please, act wisely and modify this bill. Thank you.

Loretta Wagner, Karl Snyder, 2223 West Gordon Street

Dear Mayor and Mr Hanlon this proposal has come to my attention via two organizations.

Do you as our elected officials the negative impact this will affect our city both health and safety?

As a tax payer of many years it concerns me this amendment will not only affect our physical well being of our community but will open and draw more homeless encampments to our city from other areas of our state or STATES in close proximity to us. Do you realize we would have similar problems as Philadelphia has been experiencing?? As it stands now the city is debt ridden and this proposal will cause more TAX paying residents to consider selling and moving to other areas. This sadly has already happening. As it presently stands we've too many renters and absentee landlords now shall we bring in/allow more people to use our resources without contributing??? You realize with the pandemic this presents a much greater health issue!

Allentown has worked so hard to grow from years of neglect let's not move backwards. It will also weigh heavy on our social services, police and fire departments that are already overwhelmed. Let's not tie their hands any further. I request that you consider mine and so many other community minded tax payers to say NO to this proposal.

Ken and Barbara Claypool, 2201 W Gordon Street

I am writing in response to the proposed ordinance Homeless Bill of Rights that will be before the City Council on Wednesday.

Although my husband and I are both sensitive to the plight of the homeless, we also are property owners who pay very high taxes and do our best to maintain our beautiful home in west Allentown.

It is difficult enough to deal with the upkeep of our property, with rentals all around us that house students and the general public. Many of these rental property owners - and their tenants - do not care for the exterior of their properties. Garbage, glass, grass/weed overgrowth and parties and noise are already issues that we contend with on a regular basis. And we then go around the neighborhood when we walk our dogs and pick up solo cups, garbage, dog poop that others don't see fit to do for themselves, and even clean sidewalks and walkways of our rental neighbors so that children and animals can safely walk there.

Allowing homeless people to live in our parks and yards will add another dimension to what is already a problem

Enough is enough. Please vote no to this proposal.

Mike Molewski , Managing Partner – Allentown office

As business leader in downtown Allentown I oppose the Homelessness Bill of Rights. The Bill, as written, among other items does not take into account the city's ability to accommodate these people and may lead to growth of this population from surrounding communities. It should also be well coordinated with the community organizations that serve these same people. I know you both have worked tirelessly for the City of Allentown and I am sure this Bill is good intentioned, but we can't afford to undue the success achieved to attract employers and residents. Many thanks for your continued guidance.

Donato.Giaquinto

I AGREE WITH THE WEST PARK NEIGHBOR WHO HAS TO CLEAN UP THE LITTER. IT'S ABOUT TIME CITY COUNCIL CONCERNS FOCUS ON THE RESIDENTS WHO HAVE TO PUT UP WITH THIS BULLSHIT, AFTER PAYING THEIR TAXES FOR SERVICES WHICH THE CITY IS SUPPOSED TO BE PROVIDING. WHY DOESN'T THE CITY SPEAK TO THE "CITIZENS BILL OF RIGHTS" WHICH ARE BEING VIOLATED BY THE HOMELESS ????? TICKET THE HOMELESS FOR VIOLATIONS. GUARANTEED THEY WILL EITHER CHANGE THEIR LIFE STYLE OR MOVE ON. TICKET AND/OR TOW.IT IS USED TO ADDRESS PARKING VIOLATIONS, AND AS I SEE IT THIS IS PRETTY MUCH A COMPARABLE VIOLATION.

Merrily J. Starkey

I live and work in the City of Allentown. I am in opposition to the proposed ordinance endorsing a Homeless Bill of Rights. I want to walk on city sidewalks, enjoy city parks and public spaces without encountering the homeless having erected shelters or tents in our city; without the homeless sleeping in those shelters or tents; sleeping in public places and buildings; urinating and defecating in public locations; and panhandling in public places.

My personal rights to a peaceful life in Allentown are in question, and I expect each and every one of you to protect me from the health and safety concerns proposed by the Homeless Bill of Rights.

Craig Stevens, 524 North Saint Elmo Street,
DO NOT MAKE IT LEAGAL FOR HOMELESS BUMS, DRUG ADDICTS, AND CRIMINALS
TO SLEEP IN PUBLIC SPACES THAT I PAY TO UPKEEP WITH MY TAX
DOLLARS. WHOEVER CAME UO WITH THIS SO CALL BILL OF RIGHTS IS A
COMPLETE IDIOT!

Douglas Ringholm, 2814 Greenleaf Street

For what it's worth, I am against amending proposal for homelessness, Article 180C.

Jasmine Chowdhury-Napoli, 202 N Broad Street

Dear Mr. Hanlon and members of city council,

As a resident, taxpayer and mother of Allentown I am writing to you with my deep concern over CeCe Gerlach's proposed ordinance for the homeless. While I have sympathy and compassion for these people, sections of her proposed ordinance are alarming and dangerous during these unprecedented times.

a) The Right to Enjoy Public Space. The right to use and move freely in public spaces, including sitting, lying down, sleeping, or resting in public spaces, both individually and while assembling in groups, which shall include but not be limited to public sidewalks, public parks, public transportation, and public buildings, in the same manner as any other person or groups and without discrimination on the basis of his or her housing status;

First, sleeping in public spaces is not safe for anyone. How is this looking out for the homeless? Secondly, we as taxpayers, contribute to the these public facilities to be kept clean and accessible to all citizens, not just the homeless. I don't see how this can be maintained if parts are overrun by homeless people.

c) The Right to Medical Care and Dignity in Meeting Basic Needs. The right to medical care, free from discrimination based on housing status. The opportunity to perform basis needs, such as to defecate, urinate, and to access clean water and other living necessities, in public locations and facilities, which includes public parks and buildings, with dignity and relative privacy under hygienic

This proposal is deeply disturbing as it is a health risk at any given time. I frequent the park with my young son, he could accidentally step in something or throw a ball on top of a bowel movement. Now am I going to clean this ball off? Risk contamination by picking it up and throwing it in the trash? Probably not. This

proposal is dangerous and irresponsible, clearly not thought out for the young families that frequent parks.

Also, bathing in our streams is an environmental concern for me. Surfactants and other harmful chemicals could be introduced to our eco-system. This proposal is a danger to our environment.

h) The Right to Social Exchange. The right to give and accept food, beverages, and shelter, in public spaces or elsewhere, and to connect persons experiencing homelessness with organizations that provide shelter or transitional housing and social services, such as mental health or substance abuse counseling, medical care, and employment assistance. The right also to panhandle in public spaces, and to communicate to others in other reasonable ways for othersimilar purposes.

I am very uncomfortable with panhandling due to the lack of social distancing. I have been in the healthcare industry for over 15 years and I can tell you we are no where near the end of this pandemic. I am very uncomfortable around any unmasked individual (AGAIN, this proposal is not safe!) and this could potentially expose our homeless to many individuals while panhandling, thus risking this medically fragile population as well. I feel like this could potentially increase our COVID cases in Allentown. This is an irresponsible proposal. Also, asking me for a handout when I am with my young child makes me feel unsafe and should not be allowed.

Take this perspective from a mother of a young child. I do not approve of this ordinance as written because it is dangerous for my family, the environment and the homeless. I really do have compassion for the homeless as it is "home" to many of those who are suffering from mental illness. This draft is unacceptable as written and has room for improvement.

Robert J. Spade II, PT, DPT

The homelessness bill no. 2020 is encroaching on safety concerns. I am all for personal freedom. But this bill seems to all defecation in public parks and public sidewalks?? Also, the ability to just lay down and sleep on the sidewalks in front of people's houses?? It also encroaches on landlords who can't refuse to rent to someone on their own private property based on arrest record and conviction?? I'm sorry but this bill was not thoroughly thought out and planned to adhere to the safety of all people in this city. I don't disagree with all of this bill; however, as it stands, this bill is not good for the safety of all in this city.

Sara Savage/Roba, 524 North Saint Elmo Street

I must say, this is one of the more ridiculous ideas that the City of Allentown has had thus far. Perhaps you should face and work on the housing problem head on instead of allowing it to negatively impact taxpayers of Allentown. Hopefully children aren't going to walk out their front door and see homeless drug addicts shooting drugs into their veins. Don't get me started on the paraphernalia that will collect on the sidewalks since it would be OK for homeless to take up residency there.

Charlie Versaggi

Greetings Mayor and Members of City Council,

I was forwarded a draft of the above ordinance and would like to offer my comments:

1. First let me congratulate the drafters for addressing an important issue for our community. We, like many cities like us, have a homelessness issue - most evident in the number of homeless students in our school system.
2. While a "Bill of Rights" is nice, it is not fundamental to addressing the homelessness issue in the city - providing housing for those who want it is the key to addressing this issue.
3. I suggest the drafters work with the numerous agencies currently working on homelessness (i.e. United Way, Rescue Mission, ASD, APD, food banks and churches) to better understand those actions critical to addressing homelessness.
4. Further, I suggest the drafters use the resources noted above and conduct a series of focus groups to understand the nature of homelessness from the perspective of both homeless and those who serve them. (Forgive me if this has already happened).
5. As the ordinance is currently written, the casual reader will take away the unintended impression that the city is encouraging people to live and sleep in our parks and on our sidewalks and make liberal use of our natural resources for their toilet needs. I don't believe this is the intention - or at least I hope not.
6. I totally agree that our basic human rights should not be dependent on whether or not we are homeless. But do understand there are those who choose to be homeless - a decision I respect. That decision does come with its own consequences and I'm sure those who choose homelessness understand those consequences (e.g.: their personal property may not always be secure).
7. Again, I fully support the city doing what it can to alleviate homelessness in our community:
 1. Find shelter for those in need and engage services to help them get more permanently settled, and
 2. Provide a version of a "tent city" for those who choose to live more naturally.

While I'm not an expert on homelessness I have been active in serving those less fortunate in our community for 40 years and would be happy to provide any help I can.

Best Regards,

Kyle Pavlick, Owner, Kyle's Courthouse Deli

To whom it may concern,

Regarding the proposed amendment to Article 180C with the addition of Section 180C.05-

As both a homeowner and business owner in The City of Allentown, I have a few concerns with an otherwise reasonable and respectable amendment.

180C.05a- "The right to use and move freely in public spaces, including sitting, lying down, sleeping, or resting in public spaces"... "not limited to public sidewalks, public parks, public transportation, and public buildings, in the same manner as any other person"

While "in the same manner as any other person" may be verbiage intended to prevent any behavior that would be unacceptable in current societal norms by anyone (sleeping on a public sidewalk immediately outside the entrance of a food service store front or private residence), it has too much potential to be misunderstood and incorrectly interpreted, in a way that could be detrimental to business or feeling comfort within one's own home and cause confusion around rules where there shouldn't be confusion. The simple matter of the fact is that the actions of lying down, sleeping, or resting on places such as public buildings and public sidewalks, to the point of needing redirection, are not actions of "any other person or group" that would require mentioning except in an amendment establishing a Homelessness Bill of Rights. The current practices of some who choose to sit/sleep/nap near business entrances, deters customers from entering, hurting the business and overall success of downtown. It is only with the involvement and intervention of police that these practices can be redirected and is the reason I ask that this item be rewritten or removed from the amendment.

180C.05h- "The right to panhandle in public spaces, and to communicate to others in other reasonable ways for other similar purposes"

Again, while "reasonable ways" may be intended to prevent unreasonable behavior while panhandling, it creates confusion where there shouldn't be confusion. Panhandling alone is often considered unreasonable and has a negative impact on

business, detering customers from returning to a business where they have once before been approached in this manner or from entering a business because of the presence of a panhandler. These are not hypotheticals but frequent occurrences that I myself have encountered. The City of Allentown can only be as successful as the businesses within its limits and is why I ask that this item be removed from the amendment.

The homeless deserve protections, access to resources, and services intended to provide for their safety and betterment. Providing for allowances stipulated in sections A and H however minimally accomplish the above while also negatively impacting the greater society.

Thank you for your review and consideration,

Christine Carpino, 318 N. Broad St.
Mr. Hanlon,

I would like to add my comments to the debate on the Homeless Bill of Rights.

I am a resident of the West End, living just a couple blocks from the Rose Garden in Allentown. The Rose Garden and Cedar Beach are jewels in Allentown, bringing together a diverse community of people to enjoy, relax and play. The playground and public pool are especially attractive features to have in one's backyard. I am proud of the work the city does to maintain these public spaces and am happy to have my tax dollars support these public spaces.

I also recognize that homelessness is an issue in our community and that the unhoused have too few options when it comes to safe spaces to sleep and live. Our community includes both housed and unhoused and our public spaces should be for the public - not just those who fit a certain profile.

Yet, a Homeless Bill of Rights, without inclusion or dedicated funding for outreach services, more transitional/temporary housing and more affordable housing is not a viable long-term solution - either for those who are experiencing homeless nor the other members of our community who use the parks.

As a resident of Allentown, I cannot say that I unequivocally support or oppose this bill. Rather, I strong encourage that if it is enacted, it is done so in conjunction with dedicated funding and support for our unhoused population.

Santo Napoli, 544 Hamilton Street

Greetings Mayor and Members of City Council,

I'd like to voice some concerns on the Homeless Bill of Rights being discussed at City Council on Wednesday 10/14/2020. While I do agree with some of the proposed ordinance, I have some concerns:

1. Section A - The words "lying down, sleeping or resting" make for a slippery slope. Does this allow people to sleep on a sidewalk in front of a business, on a bench at the bus terminal or in a public park at any time for any amount of time? I know people take 30 minute naps in the park on a nice day and the homeless should be able to do that as well but some may read the current language written as an opportunity to sleep for 8 to 10 hours daily on a park bench or in front of a restaurant on 19th Street or Downtown. This could impact our customers and visitors to Allentown, as we work to improve our image this would only add to perceptions people have which could lead to less foot traffic for our businesses citywide.
2. Section C - This may be confusing to who we are trying to help. Some of our parks don't have restroom facilities and the ones that do may not be open 24/7. This wording may lead some to believe that it's okay to defecate or urinate anywhere in a public park. I don't think that's what was in mind when this was written but we have to be aware of how others may read the ordinance.
3. Section H - The right to panhandle in public spaces is very concerning, it will severely impact successful businesses with high foot traffic. Some customers who feel uncomfortable may not return and may leave our city with a negative perception. This is unfair to our businesses citywide who work very hard building a clientele only to have it affected by something out of their control on the sidewalk in front of their business. Attractions such as Civic Theatre, Symphony Hall and PPL Center would be magnets for panhandlers due to high traffic in short time periods (post Covid) and it may impact their visitors long term. Economically, this could affect the city due to less Business Privilege Tax receipts with loss of customers, businesses moving to neighboring communities and more difficulty attracting new businesses.

I also have an issue with panhandling because it involves close contact, something most of us don't want to have with strangers (especially women) and especially in the times we are living in with Covid19. I believe this could add risk not only to residents and visitors but also to the homeless we are trying to protect.

I'm glad there is a conversation happening on how to help the homeless but we need to work together in a way that will not impact city businesses or attractions (including our

amazing park system). Yes, the homeless should be allowed to enjoy these places like everyone else but parts of this proposed ordinance are confusing and unclear and may also lead to unintended negative consequences as currently written. This confusing and unclear language will also put APD in very uncomfortable situations which isn't fair to the officers responding.

The City of Allentown needs to remain competitive in our region, we are competing with Bethlehem and Easton to attract businesses, customers, and visitors.

I oppose this proposed ordinance as written and look forward to a revised document after discussions are had at City Council and with input from other sources.

Ed Hanna, Union and Finch

Hi Michael - I hope this email finds you well. My name is Ed Hanna and I'm one of the owners of Union and Finch. We've been fortunate to be in business for 4 years now on what I call the outer edge of the West End and Downtown.

While it's difficult times for most restaurants the last 7+ months we continue to try and push through with a wonderful customer base and staff.

I'm writing in regards to the Homelessness Bill of Rights which was brought to my attention last week, and I wanted to share my thoughts on it.

Having lived in New York City for over 15 years (1996-2011) I've seen the impact of homelessness to the individuals impacted and to a city/businesses. I want to preface by saying I absolutely think homelessness needs to be dealt with and not ignored. A lot of homeless were dealt with unfortunate circumstances and need help "getting back on their feet". I'm not an expert by any means on how to do so, but I don't think elements of what's being proposed are the answer. Having lived in the East Village and Lower East Side of lower Manhattan it was never fun nor comforting to have to step over a homeless individual sleeping in front of a businesses, the stoop of my apartment or having to turn my child's head away from a homeless person urinating or defecating out in the open. I can say that people will avoid areas where there's a heavy presence of panhandling, homeless sleeping in public areas etc. I believe we will have a vibrant downtown again once we get through this pandemic, but I don't think allowing the below will help at all.

- Lie down or sleep, individually or in groups, in public spaces, including sidewalks, parks, public transportation and buildings
- Urinate and defecate in public locations, such as parks and buildings
- Sleep in self-erected shelters or tents on private property with the owner's permission
- Panhandle in public spaces

We need to work hand in hand (business and city council) on how to help the homeless but I strongly disagree with the above elements of this BOR. I'm also concerned that there's not enough outreach to businesses to get general input on such matters and people are working in a vacuum.

Finally, I ask that this BOR is not passed in its current form.

Thanks for your time and I hope we can meet one day.

Shannon Fugate, Executive Director of The Baum School of Art
And Al Jacobsen, Executive Director, Allentown Symphony and Miller Symphony Hall

We are writing today to express concern with several areas of the Homeless Bill of Rights being introduced. While most of this bill serves and addresses the needs of our city's most vulnerable, there are several areas of concern, as the rights as described pose health and safety problems and contribute to an unsafe and unhealthy environment for all.

Section A. The Right to Enjoy Public Space. *The right to use and move freely in public spaces, including sitting, lying down, sleeping, or resting in public spaces, both individually and while assembling in groups, which shall include but not be limited to public sidewalks, public parks, public transportation, and public buildings, in the same manner as any other person or groups and without discrimination on the basis of his or her housing status;*

Sidewalks, public parks, and public buildings, are not places designed to accommodate lying down or sleeping, and should not be used as such to the endangerment of others. Lying and sleeping on sidewalks can prohibit others from utilizing a sidewalk for the intended use of a sidewalk.

Section C. The Right to Medical Care and Dignity in Meeting Basic Needs. *The right to medical care, free from discrimination based on housing status. The opportunity to perform basic needs, such as to defecate, urinate, and to access clean water and other living necessities, in public locations and facilities, which includes public parks and buildings, with dignity and relative privacy under hygienic circumstances and conditions, in clean, safe, highly accessible facilities, free to all persons regardless of housing status;*

Our concern in this section is with regard to the performance of basic needs like bathing, urinating, and defecating in public spaces where it poses a significant health and safety risk. We are unfortunately well aware of the public health problems caused by individuals subsisting in the Arts Park, performing their basic needs in and around the park, including on The Baum School of Art's property. This bill does not appear to provide any resources to ensure that the city can invest and maintain clean, safe, and accessible bathroom facilities, and could be interpreted to allow open air solutions that offer parks and neighboring businesses little recourse for an already difficult sanitation issue. The Baum School of Art, in

particular, has notified several city departments in the recent past of such recurrent issues. Without sufficient investment included, this bill as written essentially provides inadequate and inappropriate protection for individuals who are already using outdoor public and private properties to urinate and defecate. The impact is to the detriment and at the expense of the neighborhood, which includes those struggling to reopen in the midst of an already complicated public health crisis.

At best, this is impractical and needs revision to appropriately address the problem of dealing with human waste in public spaces. At worst, it endangers the potential safe enjoyment of public parks for everyone. It is particularly devastating for our city's green spaces that are not equipped with bathrooms. Furthermore, it places an undue burden on our city's neighbors and businesses who must routinely deal with the unsanitary conditions left behind. Our park system is intended for recreation, it is not designed to meet all of the needs of human survival. The needs of the homeless must be addressed and this does not adequately address them.

Section H. The Right to Social Exchange. *The right to give and accept food, beverages, and shelter, in public spaces or elsewhere, and to connect persons experiencing homelessness with organizations that provide shelter or transitional housing and social services, such as mental health or substance abuse counseling, medical care, and employment assistance. The right also to panhandle in public spaces, and to communicate to others in other reasonable ways for other similar purposes.*

The area of concern is the right to panhandle in public spaces. Panhandling, depending on the style of the individual, can be aggressive, harassing, intimidating, and create unsafe situations for people, particularly for youth and the elderly, who can be more easily manipulated. The bill, as written, does not specify the types of public spaces or "elsewhere," where panhandling and social exchanges should be limited to ensure the safe functioning of said space as intended.

We wish to communicate our strong concerns with risk to public health and safety defined above. We urge you to require the revision of this bill before considering any sort of approval.