



Chicago Coalition for the Homeless (CCH) is staffed by public policy specialists, legal aid attorneys, and community organizers who advocate for and with people impacted by homelessness – families, unaccompanied youth, returning citizens, and low-wage workers. Together, we work to preserve a shelter safety net, develop affordable rental housing, and protect access to schools, fair wage jobs, and basic human services.



THROUGH THE COALITION, I HAVE GAINED LOTS OF COURAGE AND LEARNED A LOT ABOUT ADVOCATING FOR THE VOICELESS IN MY COMMUNITY. I SEE THINGS WRONG WITH MY COMMUNITY NOW AND I ORGANIZE PEOPLE AND SPEAK OUT AGAINST IT.

TIMOTHY BELL, GRASSROOTS LEADER





COVID RESPONSE

**THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC MADE CLEAR WHAT WE HAVE
ADVOCATED FOR DECADES: HOUSING IS CRUCIAL TO THE
HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF OUR COMMUNITIES.**

Since March 2020, we have shifted our focus to address the changing needs and priorities that the COVID-19 pandemic has created, while also ensuring the safety of our staff, grassroots leaders, and legal clients.

Our staff and leaders worked with Chicago Public Schools to ensure homeless students had access to laptops and WiFi for remote learning. We convened a Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Focus Group, comprised of 15 CPS parents and grandparents whose families are or were recently homeless. They secured 12,000 mobile hotspot devices and 100,000 laptops for low-income and homeless CPS families through their advocacy. The Focus Group also drafted a guidance document for schools and districts, adapted and distributed by the Illinois State Board of Education, on how to best support homeless students during the 2020-21 school year.





CCH advocated for the city of Chicago to provide **COVID-19 testing and vaccines** at homeless shelters, hotel rooms for high-risk individuals to safely quarantine, and portable toilets and hand sanitizing stations at encampments.

CCH joined with other housing advocates in pressing for increased tenant protections at the local and state level. This includes multiple extensions to Illinois' **eviction moratorium**.

CCH joined the Chicago Homelessness and Health Response Group for Equity (CHHRGE), a coalition of healthcare and emergency shelter providers convened in March to address the impact of COVID-19 on the health of people experiencing homelessness in Chicago. This coalition grew from just two health institutions to more than 100 member organizations today. CCH continues to chair the CHHRGE Advocacy Committee.

Responding to the urgent community need created by the pandemic, we established the **CCH Mutual Aid Fund**, which has provided modest emergency grants of up to \$500 to more than 400 Illinois residents experiencing homelessness.

The Fund received more than 6,000 requests for grants during its 5-day application period. We were able to distribute more than \$200,000, thanks to generous grants from the Affirm Cares Employee Foundation, Chicago Community COVID-19 Response Fund, Grassroots Collaborative, Homestead Affordable Development Corporation, and the Jay Pritzker Foundation, as well as modest donations from more than 350 individual donors. during the 2020-21 school year.





COMMUNITY OUTREACH

4,000+

PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

were reached by our community organizers

CCH's work is rooted in the belief that the people closest to the problem are best suited to identify effective solutions. We provide tools and support to individuals and families impacted by homelessness, centering their voices and experiences to build power and make change. Through extensive outreach at shelters, schools, and on the street, CCH educates people experiencing homelessness about their rights and options and engages those interested in advocacy.





Leadership committees including our Speakers Bureau, Reentry Project, CPS Focus Group, and Bring Chicago Home campaign engage grassroots leaders in our advocacy work. From outreach, CCH staff develop a leadership base of more than 500 homeless people of all ages. Homeless leaders are core to CCH advocacy – they testify at legislative hearings, attend rallies, talk to the media, and meet with aldermen, legislators, and government agency leaders.

While our work has changed to respond to the pandemic, our organizational philosophies have not. Our grassroots leaders with lived experience of homelessness still guide CCH's strategy and direction, with CCH organizers regularly consulting grassroots leaders by phone and hosting weekly group meetings via video conferencing. Our policy and organizing teams also meet remotely with partners across the city, state, and country to understand, learn, and push for better funding and improved systems, especially within the context of this crisis.





OUR LAW PROJECT

572

CASES

were closed by the Law Project in 2020,
representing 404 legal clients

1,563

STUDENTS/YOUTH

met with our legal aid
attorneys

70%

OF CLIENTS

were children or youth
through age 24

4,196

PEOPLE

were trained at
38 sessions

Our Law Project is the only legal aid program in Illinois dedicated to legal assistance and advocacy to homeless or at-risk individuals, youth, and families. Clients are low- to no-income.

CCH attorneys represent clients with pressing needs: access to public schools and school services, access to housing or emergency shelter, and access to medical care, public benefits, or the birth and ID records that allow them to apply for jobs and housing. The Law Project is also expanding our work to assist youth and adults with criminal records sealing and expungement, including cannabis expungement.

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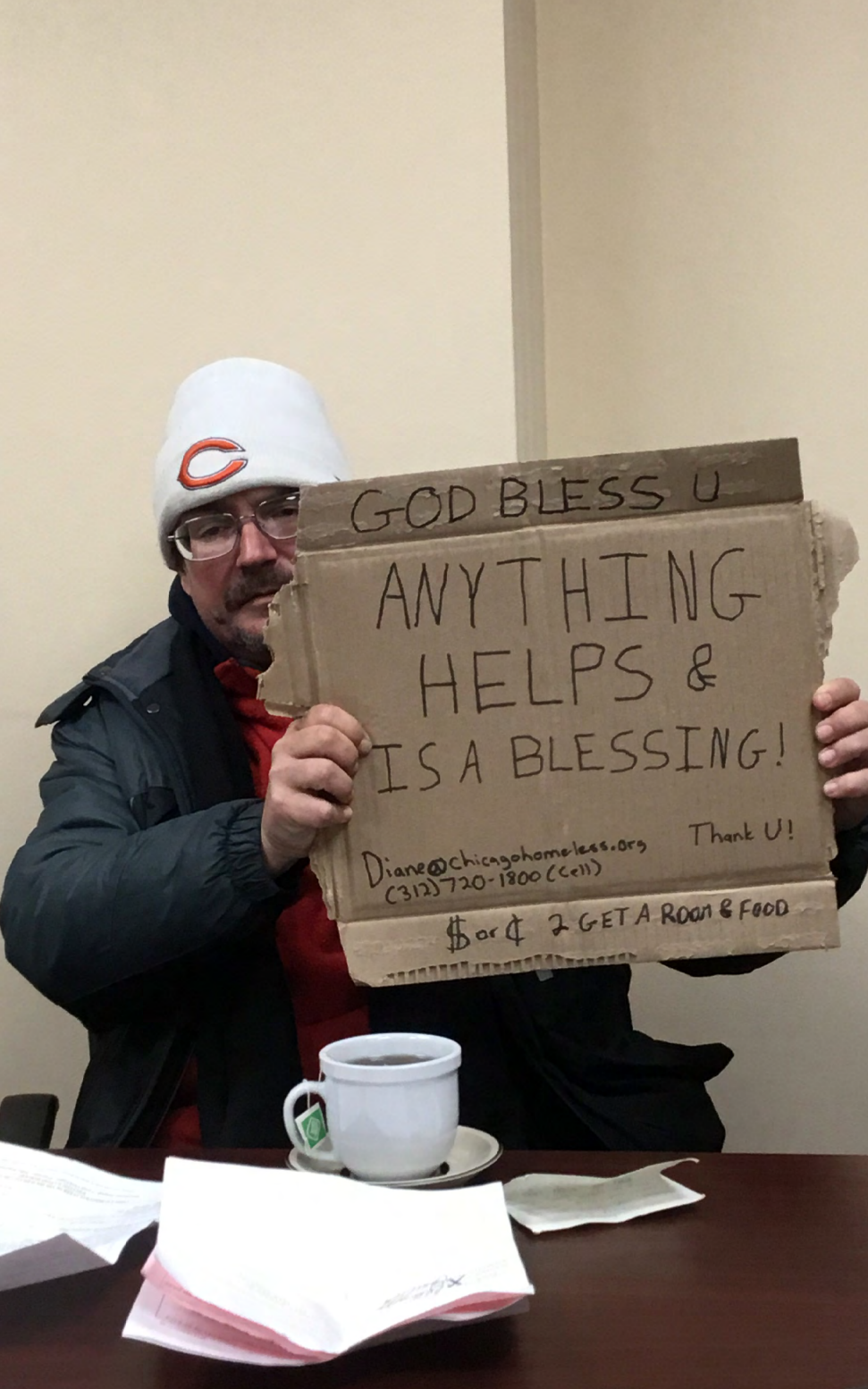
**NOT ONLY IS IT MORALLY
WRONG FOR A PERSON TO BE
DENIED ACCESS TO CHICAGO'S
EMERGENCY HOMELESS
SHELTER PROGRAM BECAUSE
OF THEIR DISABILITY, IT IS
UNLAWFUL.**

ARTURO HERNANDEZ,
STAFF ATTORNEY



In June, the CCH Law Project reached a favorable settlement in a lawsuit on behalf of a client who was denied access to the city of Chicago's emergency shelter program because of her disability. Access Living and the law firm of Porter Wright Morris & Arthur LLP co-counseled the case with the Law Project.

Our client, Laura Martin, was turned away from more than one city of Chicago shelter because she had difficulty walking and was unable to climb stairs on her own due to her rheumatoid arthritis. After being denied access to the shelter system, she had to sleep in a hospital emergency room for multiple nights before she was able to find an appropriate place to stay.



A federal district court judge struck down a state law prohibiting panhandling in public streets and medians and ordered Illinois State Police not to enforce it. The ruling ended a lawsuit by two men experiencing homelessness who challenged the law, represented by attorneys from CCH, the ACLU of Illinois, and the Chicago office of Schiff Hardin.

Michael Dumiak and Christopher Simmons, who sadly has since passed away, sued the Illinois State Police and the DuPage County State's Attorney after they were repeatedly ticketed and fined for asking passing motorists for help at a suburban Chicago intersection, while charities and religious groups collected donations at the same location without consequence.

The Village of Downers Grove and several of its police officers also settled claims against them and paid damages to Mr. Dumiak and Mr. Simmons after the Village repealed an ordinance similar to the state law.

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THIS FEELS SO GREAT NOT JUST FOR ME BUT FOR ALL PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS. THIS BEGAN SIMPLY BECAUSE I NEEDED TO ASK FOR HELP. I'M THANKFUL THE FEDERAL COURT RECOGNIZED I HAVE A RIGHT TO DO THAT.

CHRISTOPHER SIMMONS, LAW PROJECT CLIENT



ADVOCACY

CCH'S POLICY AND ORGANIZING DEPARTMENTS, ALONG WITH OUR GRASSROOTS LEADERS, ADVOCATE IN SPRINGFIELD AND CITY HALL FOR LEGISLATION AND FUNDING TO REMOVE BARRIERS FOR PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS.



Despite the 2020 legislative session being cut short due to the pandemic, CCH's Springfield team helped secure level funding for homelessness line items in the Fiscal Year 2021 state budget.

We also advocated for an additional \$396 million in CARES Act funding to be allocated for rental assistance, mortgage relief, and other homeless and housing services that was included in the budget.

Our groundbreaking campaign Bring Chicago Home unites a broad coalition of policy advocates, elected officials, and community groups, to push for significant dedicated funding for housing and homeless services to serve the nearly 77,000 people experiencing homelessness in Chicago.

Despite Mayor Lori Lightfoot's proclaimed support for an increased Real Estate Transfer Tax (RETT) to fund housing and homeless services throughout her campaign, she announced in 2019 that she would instead commit potential RETT funds to the city's general budget to fill the deficit.

BCH organized grassroots leaders to advocate in Chicago and Springfield, securing support from aldermen and state legislators for a compromised rate structure that would provide funding for homelessness without sacrificing revenues for deficit reduction. But the mayor declined to accept the proposal.

In November, BCH shifted its coalition structure to better position itself to operate in both Springfield and Chicago. Efforts will focus on leveraging traditional and social media to highlight the scope of homelessness and building power in targeted wards to organize unsupportive aldermen.



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HOMELESSNESS IMPACTS EACH AND EVERY PART OF YOUR LIFE. ONE DAY YOU HAVE A ROOF OVER YOUR HEAD, AND THE NEXT YOU DON'T. ONCE WE WERE DOUBLED-UP, MY DAUGHTER COULD NO LONGER FOCUS ON SCHOOLWORK AND HER GRADES DROPPED. AS HER MOTHER, I FELT LIKE I LET MY DAUGHTER DOWN. IT BROKE MY HEART.

TAISHI NEUMAN, GRASSROOTS LEADER



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

2020 POSED UNIQUE CHALLENGES AND INCREASED HARDSHIPS FOR THE PEOPLE CCH ADVOCATES FOR AND WITH. OUR DEEPEST GRATITUDE TO ALL OF OUR SUPPORTERS WHO STEPPED UP DURING THIS TRYING TIME. YOUR GENEROSITY ALLOWED US TO INNOVATE AND ACT SWIFTLY DURING A TIME OF CRISIS. WE ARE HUMBLY GRATEFUL TO HAVE YOUR SUPPORT IN THIS EFFORT. WE REMAINED STRONG BECAUSE YOU STAND WITH US. THANK YOU.



 **CHICAGO COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS**

