



House the Homeless founded in 1989, is the oldest, all volunteer, action organization in Texas fighting to *combat, end and prevent* homelessness all across North America.

P.O. Box 2312 Austin, TX 78768 www.HouseTheHomeless.org www.UniversalLivingWage.org

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Senator Watson- I would like to share with you my observations on the City-Wide TXDOT meeting regarding the multi-million dollar renovation of the IH 35 Corridor.

TX-DOT has brought together a number of key organizations and elected officials to help TXDOT house the people experiencing Homelessness under their bridges and overpasses while they renovate this corridor including dropping the highway beneath the ground around center city of Austin.

As the nation is beginning to repair its infrastructure, these displaced people they will be displaced once again. This will be repeated again and again all across the nation. What's the plan? HTH will start with an outreach program to fully "Winterize" 200 folks here in Austin. Then what? We are calling for a Budgetary line item in every State /Federal budget to house the homeless individuals that they are about to displace. This renovation must be a multi-million dollar + operation.

House the Homeless is working with TXDOT for their *Be Seen, Be Safe* campaign. However, it was created by TXDOT before getting any input from us in the field. They have reflective bags that will be gone one day after they are distributed. We have suggested reflective vests but to no avail. In any event, TXDOT came to the two meetings believing that the homeless advocacy community could simply just house these people. I explained that our housing stock has been depleted with 15,000 Katrina survivors, the Veteran's push (which only housed the mentally stable Vets) and another 5,000 Harvey survivors. Note that these people all line butted in front of other homeless people who have been waiting for housing and wage relief for years. This year's Annual House the Homeless Survey will be on this very topic when we hope to learn how many times these folks have been through the "Coordinated Assessment" process while waiting in the same line.

America is beginning to repair its infrastructure. These displaced people will be displaced again. What's the plan? As Director of Legal Aid for the Homeless, I know that it takes 12-18 months to get disabled folks a disability check (\$735. per month which houses no one but can be coupled with subsidy dollars to house people when and if there is housing stock) and it takes Walter Morrow- 5-6 years to build a Garden Terrace or a Capital Suites housing facility.

In the meantime, HTH will start with an outreach program to fully "winterize" 200 folks. Then what? At the very least, we need a facility to temporarily house folks...not just in Austin but all over the nation. We are calling for a line item in every State/Federal highway budget to **House**

the Homeless. These people are in harm's way. The highway contractors want to be on track. We want our people to be safe and housed. This is a huge opportunity to replicate our campaign concept to **Discharge No One Into Homelessness.**

Perhaps a collaborative effort with Congressman Lloyd Doggett will bear fruit.

Thoughts?

Thank you.