



HOUSEKEYS ACTION NETWORK DENVER

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March 27th, 2025

Dear Mayor Mike Johnston,

We are writing to you today as a collective of houseless families currently living in Denver. Yes, Mayor, there are still children living on the streets. In fact, one of your own City directors has confirmed a 150% increase in houseless families between 2022 to 2024. We are:

- Parents with a disabled child in a wheelchair,
- Hardworking adults with jobs also enrolled in 3 different work-training programs simultaneously,
- A father who recently lost his job due to racism and xenophobia,
- US citizens, including a single mother with a teen girl escaping domestic violence and attempting to access housing support for nearly 3 years now,
- Another citizen who has been told her family can't get housing because she has 7 children,
- A newcomer migrant family without any friends or relatives to receive us,
- People paying for weekly hotel stay that ends up costing more than an apartment while having less of the security, rights, and protections that housing and tenancy provide,
- Parents with kids who can't bathe regularly but still go to school everyday,
- Families who have hidden under bridges and were told to move along without being connected to resources,
- Parents who struggle maintaining jobs when your vehicle is your home and you have to leave work earlier to pick up your kids from school,
- And many more - hundreds of us in need...

For each of us, the present system as it stands today has failed us... ***"It's been very difficult to comprehend the sheer quantity of adversaries that we've met in this City."*** We don't have anywhere stable for ourselves and our children to live. We want you to know that we are not asking to be gifted anything unnecessarily, but to have support in orienting ourselves. We are asking you for an opportunity more than anything.

On Monday, March 17th, a number of us (though nowhere near the 400-600 families currently without housing) came to speak at City Council to let our representatives and community know that the road we've been told leads to housing is a dead end. Many of us families have been calling the Salvation Army Connection Center for months - multiple times per week, multiple times per day, in an attempt to seek emergency shelter. One mother of three kids states, ***"I called over 400 times and it was raining and snowing, and they still said they had no options"***. Department of Housing and Stability (HOST) outreach workers themselves have told us that they can't even get in touch with the Connection Center. For that reason, even after these families connected with outreach workers that Monday (though they have known some of these families for many months), every single family that spoke up left with no assistance - still struggling, still on the streets.





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At this point, it feels as though we have spoken to nearly everyone in this system, often multiple times - as one parent said, ***“a lot of us are in this hole where they make promises and never fulfill them, like a partner who said that they’ll marry you but never do”***... So all that is left for us is to talk to you, Mayor Johnston, and appeal to you not just as the Mayor of this City of opportunity, but as a fellow father who wants his children to have every chance to develop in a safe, supportive environment.

As one dad put it, ***“if it was my City, I wouldn’t permit this, because they’re mistreating people who are desperate for support.”*** We understand you have a difficult job, and the conversation we want to have with you is one regarding how to most effectively address these barriers, because ***“if the resources are so limited, then we need to utilize them in the most effective way”*** - wouldn’t you agree?

The Salvation Army Connection Center does not need more workers - we need a better solution. We, as the families at the heart of this issue, do not want to be ***“part of the problem, but part of the solution!!!”*** We ask that you let us know when you would be next available for a virtual meeting to hear directly from us regarding the barriers that keep us in this cycle, to better understand our reality, and include us in the process towards a solution. Please send us some dates and times that you would be available to meet - please keep in mind those of us who work during the day and have to pick up our children after school.

Thank you, and may we commit to protecting the children - ALL the children - of this great City. It takes a village!

Sincerely,
Denver’s unhoused parents and children

