



**NAMI New Hampshire Response to Supreme Court Decision  
Permitting the Criminalization of Homelessness  
(July 1, 2024)**

Concord, NH – On June 28, 2024, the US Supreme Court issued a ruling in *City of Grants Pass v. Johnson*, permitting the criminalization of homelessness. This ruling will have a swift and direct impact on Granite Staters living with mental illness. Recent data indicates that 67% of individuals who are unhoused have some form of mental illness, while 77% have experienced mental illness at some point in their life.

None of us, nor our loved ones, are immune to mental illness or potential homelessness. Our communities of unhoused folks in New Hampshire represent a vast array of socioeconomic backgrounds, educational accomplishments, military service, and professional achievements.

As a result of this ruling, people experiencing homelessness will face steep fines and heightened interactions with law enforcement – interactions that may jeopardize their safety and stability. Individuals in crisis deserve help, not handcuffs.

For too long, people living with mental illness have been overrepresented in our criminal justice system. Data from NH jails indicates that 93% percent of high utilizers who matched to Medicaid had at least one behavioral health claim.

Criminalizing those who need care will not solve the crisis of untreated mental illness. Pouring more city, county, and state money into jailing unhoused individuals will not solve homelessness.

NAMI NH is calling upon elected officials and local decisionmakers statewide to choose help over handcuffs. To provide for the basic needs of community members. To remember that any one of us, or our loved ones, could become unhoused.

NAMI NH will continue advocating for programs and policies that increase the availability of safe, stable, and affordable housing for all, and envisions a future where everyone has their basic needs met and gets the care they need within their community.

*NAMI New Hampshire is a grassroots organization working to improve the lives of all people affected by mental illness and suicide through support, education and advocacy.*

*Learn more at [NAMINH.org](https://www.naminh.org).*



**NAMI National Statement on Supreme Court Decision  
Allowing Communities to Criminalize Homelessness**  
(June 28, 2024)

Arlington, VA – The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) today released the following statement from Chief Executive Officer Daniel H. Gillison, Jr. on the disappointing U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *City of Grants Pass v. Johnson*:

“More than 250,000 Americans will sleep outside tonight because no safe and accessible shelter options are available. This number is more than a statistic for NAMI, it includes too many in our communities who live with mental illness.

Today’s ruling from the U.S. Supreme Court in *City of Grants Pass v. Johnson* that effectively allows the criminalization of homelessness will undoubtedly have devastating consequences for people with mental illness who are unhoused. By allowing communities to pass laws that criminalize sleeping in public when no other safe and accessible shelter is available, people experiencing homelessness could face increased interactions with law enforcement, steep fines that perpetuate financial instability, and additional barriers to steady employment and stable housing – the opposite of what people need on their path to recovery and wellness. People with mental illness are already overrepresented in our criminal justice system; this ruling only exacerbates a systemic problem.

It doesn’t have to be this way. Policymakers should focus on policies and programs that expand access to stable, safe and affordable housing for people with mental illness rather than criminalizing the basic needs of people experiencing homelessness. The NAMI Alliance will continue fighting to ensure everyone has the services and supports – like housing – that they need to get well and stay well.”

*The National Alliance on Mental Illness is the nation’s largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to improving the lives of individuals and families affected by mental illness.*