

An Open Letter to Mayor Ballard:

The Indianapolis Star reported today that you did not sign the Homeless Bill of Rights into law. Rather you acted as a typical politician and waited until 3:00 p.m. on a Friday (too late for press coverage) to veto a bill that could have impacted thousands of homeless Hoosiers living in your city. It was a moment of shame for both you and your city.

The wealth and opulence in your city is evident as you drive through it, the poverty is as well. You are not just the mayor of those with money, you are the mayor of those who live without housing in Indianapolis. To say the homeless already have the rights of other citizens is to downplay their hardship and it shows a lack of humanity that is shameful.

I watched as this bill progressed forward and felt proud of the city council for having the courage to pass Proposition 291, I really thought Indianapolis was going to be a leader on this issue in this country. One more time we proved that leadership is not in the cards for us on an issue related to poverty. Winston Churchill said (and I paraphrase): "a country can be judged by how it treats those who have the least". So can a city.

In this country we do have rights, but those rights are often unattainable for the poor, people of color, the sick and mentally ill, single mothers and fathers, and those without an adequate education or training. People without housing are subjected to anti-friendly ordinances, those serving them are often criticized, even in your city a man in his 80's was arrested for feeding the homeless. Do we really believe the rights of those citizens are real?

There are solutions, Mayor. You could change your mind and do the right thing. If you aren't willing to do that perhaps the City Council will step up and show courage by overturning your veto. After all, we do have safeguards and rights in this state and they can do that. I hope and pray they do. What would be even better however, would be that you rethink your position, understand the complexity of those living unhoused in your community, and reach out symbolically to protect them by rescinding your veto.

Sincerely,

Barbara Anderson, Jeffersonville, IN