



● **UPCOMING WEBINAR**

**Being a Great Messenger:  
Engaging Effectively with  
Lawmakers on the Local,  
State & Federal Level**

Thursday April 10 @ 3:00 P.M. ET

**Register Today →**

**John Threlkeld**

**Senior Congressional Affairs  
Manager**

**National Alliance to End  
Homelessness**

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# Housekeeping



Chat/Q&A Box



Accompanying documents



Webinar is recorded



# National Alliance to End Homelessness Statements for Participation

The Alliance works to ensure that diverse voices are welcomed and included as facilitators, attendees, and guests in all forums.



The organization has a zero-tolerance policy for any form of discrimination or abusive behavior. The Alliance is committed to ensuring that all its events are safe and respectful for all participants.



Participants acknowledge that any form of discrimination, violence, or abusive behavior may result in removal from all forums depending on the situation.



If any discrimination is witnessed or experienced during the webinar, or if you feel unsafe, please notify any member of the Alliance staff.



The National Alliance to End Homelessness strives to create a diverse, inclusive, accepting, and safe space for everyone.

# Four distinguished advocates:

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- **Sarah Fox**, Chief Executive Officer, Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness
- **Katherine Whitney**, Community Impact Program Manager, Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness
- **Monet Silva**, Executive Director, New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness
- **Michael Giovanis**, Founding Partner, Availing Echoism

Why should I advocate with Members of Congress on homelessness when organizations like the Alliance are already active on Capitol Hill?

# What's the point in advocating with Members of Congress on homelessness?

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## **Homeless Assistance Grants:**

Continuum of Care and Emergency Solutions Grants Programs

Shelter

Rapid Re-Housing

Permanent Supportive Housing

Outreach

HMIS

“ESG funding and the CoC funding are the only grants that are used to help end homelessness. We do not get any other funding from the state, although each county may receive some funding it is only enough to keep the lights on.” **Rural CoC**

“COC and ESG funding are the backbone of our homeless service system. I am searching for a word stronger than `vital.’ Without this funding, we would not have a homelessness response system, and the financial impact and human toll is undefinable.” **Rural CoC**

“A 10% cut would (cause the CoC to lose) staffing and ongoing services (for current clients). The CoC’s (providers are) already experiencing high turnover and capacity issues, which would further harm the community’s homeless response system.” **Suburban CoC**

“The CoC and ESG funds are the primary resource for homeless services in our community. Only \$2 million per year is allocated from the city and much less from the Commonwealth. The CoC funds alone provide housing to over 1,700 chronically homeless people each day...While our CoC is moving 1,600 per year to permanent housing, approximately 4,000 become homeless each year. We already cannot keep up with the housing crisis. Every dollar cut puts us further behind and increases unsheltered homelessness because shelters are full.” **Urban CoC**

“Cutting our CoC and/or ESG funding would be disastrous for our community! We have limited ESG funding as it is, and our CoC funds cover units that are desperately needed. We have a large number of eligible people experiencing homelessness who are in need of shelter and housing on our Coordinated Entry waitlist. To take away what limited amounts of resources we have would increase the amount of unsheltered people in our community, which is already exacerbated by the recent migrant crisis, and would undo all of the hard work our community has done thus far to address homelessness.” **Suburban CoC**

# How is it possible to advocate with Members of Congress on homelessness?

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NAEH Take Action: phone calls, short emails, canned emails

Your own letters

Meetings with Senators/Representatives or their staffers

In Washington, DC

Virtual

Back home at their offices or your offices

# homelessness right now?

1. Homeless Assistance Grants: The Alliance's FY26 request is \$4.92B.

2. Medicaid: The House is on record in favor of cutting \$880B from a committee which oversees Medicaid.

3. Emergency Housing Vouchers: 59K outstanding EHV's, but the program will run out of funding in 2026 without additional funding.

# Guest Speaker

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**Sarah Fox**

Chief Executive Officer

Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness

# Guest Speaker

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**Katherine Whitney**

Community Impact Program Manager

Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness

# STATE & FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY IN CONNECTICUT

Sarah Fox, Chief Executive Officer  
Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness  
**contact:** [sfox@cceh.org](mailto:sfox@cceh.org)

Katherine Whitney, Community Impact Program Manager  
Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness  
**contact:** [kwhitney@cceh.org](mailto:kwhitney@cceh.org)

THURSDAY, APRIL 10TH, 2025



# STATE & FEDERAL ROLES

## Goals:

- Keep communication channels open
- Create opportunities to come together
- Become the expert lawmakers rely on
- Know what you are asking for
- Ask how *you* can help *them*



# BUILDING STATE-LEVEL CHAMPIONS

- Ask for direct input: lawmakers can weigh in on policy strategy, funding and budgets (e.g., legislative roundtables)
- Show your work: invite legislators to your site, to a walking tour, or to participate in advocacy trainings
- Get everyone involved in outreach: board members, community partners, clients, colleagues, civic groups
- Show up for hearings: tell legislators your story, thank them for their effort, follow up with more information if asked

# RESULTS IN HARTFORD

- Informed, engaged lawmakers and municipal leadership
- First-ever End Homelessness Caucus
- Support for bills in Housing, Appropriations, Planning & Zoning, Human Services, and Public Health committees



# BUILDING STRONG FEDERAL RELATIONSHIPS

- Take opportunities to meet in person (Capitol Hill Day!) or reach out to schedule virtual meetings.
- Send regular updates and flag concerns, whether about funding (e.g. cuts & freezes) or policy (e.g. Equal Access Rule, *Johnson v. Grant's Pass*).
- Invite legislators to your press conferences, site tours, training events, and celebrations; attend their events and speak up.
- Ask how *you* can help! Offer to send data and stories, and to answer questions.

# RESULTS IN WASHINGTON

- Regular opportunities to speak directly to decision-makers
- Strong public support for providers from congressional delegation
- Providers are experts and can offer data and predict impacts of cuts or policy changes



# Guest Speaker

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**Monet Silva**

**Executive Director**

**New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness**

[monet-s@nmceh.org](mailto:monet-s@nmceh.org)

# Engaging With Lawmakers

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Monet Silva  
Executive Director  
New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness



New Mexico  
Coalition to End  
Homelessness

# WHAT IF THEY DON'T AGREE...

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- Building relationships is key
- Understand their “Why”
- Reframe the Issue
- Use bipartisan language
- Show support from constituents
- Play the long game



# HOW TO USE DATA...

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- Know your audience
- Keep It clear and simple
- Use relevant, localized data
- Provide actionable Insights
- Share data regularly with policy makers
- Be prepared with backup
- Use data to build trust



# MEETINGS WITH POLICY MAKERS

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- Plan ahead with everyone that will present
- Set agenda with lawmakers staff
- Send materials ahead of time and have copies on hand
- Make sure there is time for lawmaker and/or staff to share or ask questions
- Make your ask! AND What is their ask?



# THANK YOU!

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Monet Silva  
Executive Director  
New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness



New Mexico  
Coalition to End  
Homelessness

# Guest Speaker

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**Michael Giovanis**  
Founding Partner  
Availing Echoism New

# Organizing a State-Level Hill Day Event & Empowering Leadership through Lived Experience

Michael Giovanis, Availing Echoism  
hello@availingechoism.com

# Event Strategy & Planning

## Foundations of a Successful State-Level Hill Day

- 🎯 **Set Specific Policy Goals:** Define clear legislative asks aligned with your coalition's priorities.
- 👥 **Build a Planning Team:** Include advocates, organizers, and people with lived experience in the planning team.
- 🗺️ **Map Legislative Targets:** Prioritize meetings with key committee members and district champions.



Photo by Zac Nielson on Unsplash

# Execution Tactics That Work

Make Your Hill Day Smooth, Effective, and Impactful



## **Train Beforehand**

Offer talking point prep and role-playing sessions so all advocates are confident.



## **Stick to the Message**

Unified talking points = stronger voice and credibility



## **Be Flexible**

Expect short meetings, no-shows, or impromptu walk-ins—flexibility is key.

# Logistical Tips for Smooth Execution

## Managing the Day with Flexibility and Real-Time Coordination



### **Deploy Free-Floating Volunteers**

Assign volunteers to assist with directions, greet attendees, and fill gaps in real time.



### **Use Shared Spreadsheet Tools**

Track lawmaker visits and update meeting status in real time for everyone involved.



### **Kick-Off Event**

Have an event in the morning to give people a central gathering place and use this time to organize.

# From Tactics to Transformation

What Happens When Lived Experience Leads the Advocacy

# Lived Experience Is Not Optional

It's the Cornerstone of Authentic Advocacy



## **Drives Political Urgency**

Legislators respond more deeply when hearing directly from people impacted by policy.



## **Shifts the Narrative**

Reframes issues like homelessness from abstract problems to urgent human realities.



## **Improves Policy Outcomes**

Programs shaped by lived experience better reflect real needs and on-the-ground realities.

# Making It Work: Support for Lived Experience Advocates

## Practical Steps to Enable Authentic Participation

- **Offer Compensation & Support:** Stipends, meals, transportation, and time off to remove barriers.
- **Provide Training & Orientation:** Prepare advocates to speak confidently and understand legislative processes.
- **Create Safe & Inclusive Spaces:** Ensure trauma-informed environments and respect for emotional boundaries.



Photo by Hannah Busing on Unsplash

# Embedding Lived Leadership Long-Term

## Beyond One Event: Shifting Organizational Culture

- **Institutionalize Lived Input:** Create advisory roles and permanent seats for LE advocates in coalitions and committees.
- **Value Lived Expertise Equally:** Treat lived experience as expertise—compensate and elevate it alongside academic and professional voices.
- **Build Career Pathways:** Support skill-building and leadership growth into sustained roles in advocacy and policy.



Photo by Rachel Coyne on Unsplash

# Bonus Tips

## Managing the Day with Flexibility and Real-Time Coordination



### **Keep Participants Engaged**

Use gaps in meetings for scavenger hunts or purposeful activities like writing thank you notes.



### **Lived Experience Day on the Hill**

An earlier separate day from your coalition's main day on the hill.  
Focus on 1 on 1 meetings.



### **Invite Agency Leaders**

Include state or local agency heads for meetings—impact isn't limited to legislators.

**Samantha Wood**  
Senior Field Organizer  
National Alliance to End  
Homelessness

[swood@naeh.org](mailto:swood@naeh.org)

# Q&A Time!

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“Every moment is an organizing opportunity, every person a potential activist, every minute a chance to change the world.”

~Dolores Huerta

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**Thank You So Much For Being Here  
Today!!!**