

**Statement of Congressman Dennis J. Kucinich  
Homeless Summit Report  
August 21, 2003**

On August 9, 2003, one adult and three juveniles were arrested for attacking at least 6 homeless persons with a stun gun while they were sleeping on park benches in Downtown Cleveland.

As cruel and outrageous as these attacks are, we know that these are not isolated incidents. The assaults were allegedly perpetrated to emulate attacks from recent “reality” movies. According the yesterday’s Cleveland Plain Dealer, these attacks are “part of a disturbing wave of assaults on the homeless.”

When I learned of the attacks, I wrote to Attorney General Ashcroft asking him to initiate an investigation into these attacks, to investigate the nature and scope of violent acts and hate crimes against the homeless, and to ensure that all laws are enforced to protect the homeless. Copies of my letter are available today. We are awaiting response from the Department of Justice.

As cruel and outrageous as these attacks are, we know that violent crimes are not the only assaults against the homeless population here and elsewhere in the United States.

Homeless persons are among the most vulnerable citizens in our society. They cannot seek refuge in their own homes.

There are many causes of homelessness and reasons why persons experiencing homelessness are not finding permanent homes. These include:

Lack of affordable housing;

Lack of information about where to find affordable housing that exists;

Deterioration of homes and buildings which could serve as housing;

Predatory lending practices producing a wave of foreclosures;

Shortage of legal services for those facing foreclosure or eviction;

Shortage of jobs available that pay a living wage;

Shortage of job training and retraining programs for those who lost jobs;

Difficulty of those with criminal records to find employment;

Lack of affordable, quality day care;

Inability of prospective employers to contact those without permanent addresses;

Lack of adequate health care, regardless of housing status;

Lack of mental health services, regardless of housing status;

Inadequate short-term and long-term addiction recovery programs;

Shortage of emergency shelter beds for people who are homeless; and

Community opposition for locating service programs for the homeless;

These are a sampling of the findings of the 10<sup>th</sup> District Homelessness Summit. The people in this room, persons who are homeless or formerly homeless, or who are advocates for the homeless, or who are public officials, joined me in this room on February 7 of this year. That was the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> District Homelessness Summit in which we agreed to create the dialogue necessary to identify the factors leading to and exacerbating homelessness and to find solutions to the problem.

As a result of that meeting, a follow-up meeting on March 28, and a survey of participants and invitees, a group of volunteers came together to analyze what was discussed.

The result is this report, which identifies and proposes solutions.

Some of the solutions identified in the report include:

Full funding for affordable and subsidized housing programs;

Expansion of HUD's Public Housing and Section 8 subsidy programs to meet the existing need for affordable housing, thus eliminating the wait lists and putting everyone who qualifies in affordable housing;

Protect the Low Income Housing Tax Credit which encourages investment in affordable housing for low-income families;

Enact federal legislation to protect homebuyers from predatory lending practices;

Streamline processes for provide assistance for homeless persons to locate and maintain housing;

Implement federal legislation to ensure all workers a living wage;

Enforce current employment protection rules;

Implement protections specifically designed for day laborers through the Day Laborer Fairness and Protection Act;

Provide increased funding, physical space, and staffing to quality substance abuse rehabilitation programs with beds dedicated to homeless patients;

Prohibit health care and penal institutions from discharging patients into homelessness;

Review child support enforcement laws to make sure that each parent's payment requirements are appropriate according to their debt and financial situation;

Create more permanent supportive housing programs;

Increase funding and program capacity for job skill training and education programs;

Provide housing assistance to military personnel, veterans, and their families;

Ensure no net loss of beds dedicated to serving veterans during the consolidation of veterans services;

Provide health care for all Americans, regardless of housing status;

Address community opposition to locating homelessness service programs through education and awareness training;

Affirm the basic human rights of homeless persons;

Expand and fully fund support programs for homeless victims of domestic violence;

Include homeless persons as a protected class in federal and state hate crime legislation;

This report is an important milestone in the work of this community. I intend to take this report back to Washington with me next month and use it as the centerpiece of my legislative agenda on homelessness.

But this is a milestone, not the answer.

Where there is already legislation addressing the problems identified, I will push for passage.

Where there is no existing legislation, I will need further help from members of the Homelessness Summit and their allies nationwide to work with me and my colleagues in Congress to craft a legislative response.