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**THINK DIGNITY SUPPORTS LOCAL HOMELESS COMMUNITY IN
CLASS ACTION SUIT AGAINST THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO**

Nonprofit agrees that use of illegal encroachment ordinance unconstitutional

CONTACT:

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July 19 (SAN DIEGO)—Think Dignity, a nonprofit that advocates basic dignity for San Diego's homeless community, supports local homeless in their class action suit against the City of San Diego. The suit, recently filed by attorneys Scott Dreher and Kath Rogers, argues that the illegal encroachment code has become the City's primary enforcement tool to address homelessness. The code penalizes people living on the streets for placing belongings on public property when they have no other option.

"We understand that there is a delicate balance between the rights of our housed and unhoused neighbors", said Anne Rios, Executive Director of Think Dignity. "However, we find it imperative to speak out against the criminalization of anyone simply based on their existence."

Think Dignity sees many clients at their legal clinics that have been forced into the judicial system because of quality of life offenses, such as sleeping on the street. The amount of resources spent when an individual is arrested under illegal encroachment- ranging from the initial arrest, to the days and nights in jail, the salaries of the court staff, and the strain on scarce judicial resources- can be costly to all San Diegans.

Currently, through Think Dignity's Homeless Youth Legal and Advocacy Project, attorneys Anne Rios and Michelle Woodson represent one of the class action's named plaintiffs in her criminal defense case, aiming to modify the stay away order she was issued after being arrested for illegal encroachment.

"The disparate application of this law harms our most disadvantaged populations", said Rios. "Once someone is touched by the criminal justice system it becomes increasingly difficult for them to do exactly what we expect from them: find a job, clean up, get off the streets. How can we expect change when we are the ones helping keep the status quo?"

The suit echoes a nationwide shift away from the criminalization of homelessness; a shift that has been strongly advocated for by groups like Think Dignity.

For more information about Think Dignity visit www.thinkdignity.org. For press inquiries, email Anne Rios at anne@thinkdignity.org or call (619) 537--8736.

ABOUT THINK DIGNITY

Think Dignity (TD), formerly Girls Think Tank, inspires, empowers and organizes the San Diego community to advance basic dignity for those living on the streets in San Diego through activism and advocacy. TD partners with a diverse group of individuals and organizations that share its commitment to ensuring basic dignity for San Diego's displaced citizens. TD programs include storing homeless individuals' personal property, legal referral clinics to help people resolve issues arising from their homelessness, and providing clean drinking water and survival supplies necessary for basic dignity. For more information, visit www.thinkdignity.org.

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