

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.acluohio.org/en/press-releases/city-bedford-ceases-enforcement-unconstitutional-nuisance-ordinance>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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BEDFORD Today, as a result of litigation brought by the ACLU, the ACLU of Ohio, and The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, the City of Bedford has suspended enforcement of its unconstitutional Criminal Activity Nuisance Ordinance while the litigation proceeds. The plaintiffs, the Fair Housing Center for Rights & Research and Beverley Somai, filed a lawsuit on February 20, 2019 alleging that Bedford's Nuisance Ordinance violates the First Amendment by penalizing people for calling the police for help and is used to discriminate against communities of color, low-income households, people with disabilities, and domestic violence survivors.

A call for help should never result in eviction. No one's housing should be at risk simply because they called 911. Bedford's law and other nuisance laws like it don't benefit anyone; they are used to exclude and mistreat people. We are pleased that the City agreed to a preliminary injunction. We will continue fighting for the ordinance to be repealed for good, said Elizabeth Bonham, staff attorney for the ACLU of Ohio.

Courts across the country have found that local nuisance ordinances violate residents' rights under the First Amendment and the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment because they punish people for reaching out to their governments, often without notice or an opportunity to challenge whether they should be considered a nuisance.

Bedford's nuisance ordinance does not further any legitimate public safety goals; it actually harms public safety by penalizing victims of crime and other people who require emergency assistance, added Jennifer Sheehe, attorney for The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland. Our clients' experience is far from an anomaly. Bedford's broad, discriminatory, punitive ordinance should be permanently struck down."

Read the [stipulation](#).

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