

[Statement from Monroe County sheriff Ruben Marté on June 3, 2026]

The Monroe County Sheriff's Office will continue to approach interactions with unhoused individuals professionally, respectfully, and in accordance with Indiana law. Senate Enrolled Act 285 establishes statewide standards regarding unauthorized sleeping or camping on public property, and as with any state law, our deputies have a responsibility to understand and comply with those requirements.

At the same time, we recognize that homelessness is a complex issue driven by factors that often include housing insecurity, mental health challenges, substance use disorders, economic hardship, and other circumstances that cannot be solved through enforcement alone. The Sheriff's Office has no interest in trying to arrest our way out of homelessness, because experience has shown that law enforcement action by itself does not resolve the underlying causes that place people in these situations.

Operationally, complaints involving individuals sleeping on public property will continue to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Deputies will first evaluate the circumstances, ensure public safety, and seek voluntary compliance whenever possible. We will continue working with community partners and service providers when appropriate to connect individuals with available resources and assistance.

The primary difference under SEA 285 is that the legal framework governing unauthorized camping or sleeping on public property is now established by state statute. As a result, deputies will have an obligation to consider the requirements and enforcement mechanisms provided under that law when responding to complaints. However, our overall philosophy remains unchanged: enforcement decisions will be guided by the facts of each situation, public safety considerations, and the requirements of Indiana law.

With respect to the county jail, the impact of SEA 285 is difficult to predict. While we do not anticipate that the Monroe County Sheriff's Office alone will significantly alter its approach to enforcement, we recognize that the law applies statewide and may influence enforcement practices among the various law enforcement agencies whose arrests ultimately result in individuals being lodged in the Monroe County Jail. As a result, it is possible that we could see an increase in jail admissions related to violations associated with the new law.

At this stage, however, it would be speculative to predict the magnitude of that impact. The Sheriff's Office is closely monitoring implementation of SEA 285 and its effects on both enforcement activity and jail operations. What we can say with confidence is that incarceration alone is unlikely to resolve the underlying issues that contribute to homelessness, and we will continue to support collaborative approaches that balance public safety, compliance with state law, and access to community resources.

The Monroe County Sheriff's Office remains committed to treating all individuals with dignity and respect while balancing the interests of the broader community. We will continue to work

collaboratively with local government, community organizations, and service providers to address homelessness in ways that are both lawful and humane.