

Dear Rep. Nosse and House Judiciary Committee —

I am writing as a 30-year resident of and homeowner in Portland, to strongly encourage you to oppose the poorly-considered legislation proposed in HB 2959. This bill proffers a terrible “solution” to a difficult problem. We can and must do better.

HB 2959 would effectively criminalize the natural bodily functions of those without housing or access to sanitary restrooms. This is truly madness. No one is comfortable with excrement in public places, for numerous obvious reasons. Those living without homes are made more miserable by that crude necessity than anyone else — put yourself in their place. This degrading situation is a nightmare for the mentally unstable, the unhoused, as well as those of us who are blessed with decent living standards and want healthy, safe communities for our families.

HB 2959 would harshly intensify the problem at a significant cost to the taxpayer. Lack of housing has become epidemic, compounded by lack of mental health services and lack of adequate public sanitary resources. In addition to deepening the misery of those without homes, HB 2959 would increase the load on courts and jails, wasting scarce-enough public dollars. It would certainly not solve the problem of people needing to relieve themselves with nowhere appropriate to do so.

A more comprehensive, fair, and inclusive solution is obvious: Provide the funding necessary to increase access to restrooms. Simple. Where would those funds come from? Perhaps from those who lobby hardest for a punitive response: a tax on entities that exert pressure on elected officials to make this unseemly problem disappear.

I urge you not to criminalize people who don't have the money to cater to places of business where they can use facilities, or people who lack even bus fare to get to a public library, City Hall, or County or State building where public facilities are available — assuming their bodily functions will wait for the bus and are only an issue during business hours.

Please oppose HB 2959 and work to solve the problem in a meaningful way. I look forward to hearing from you in response to this post.

Very sincerely yours,

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