



March 11, 2019

Dear Chair Williamson, Vice Chairs Gorsek and Sprenger, and Members of the Committee,

I am Kaia Sand, executive director of Street Roots, a non-profit weekly newspaper sold by people experiencing homelessness and poverty to earn an income in the Portland metro area.

Our non-profit is on the front-lines of the issues regarding homelessness and hygiene. People struggling with homelessness come to our office for hospitality, which includes access to our bathroom. Their need to discharge human waste is not a choice, and is often coupled with other health vulnerabilities resulting from homelessness that make using a bathroom that much more urgent.

Unhoused go to the bathroom in public out of desperation. I recall talking to a woman who had just gone to the bathroom on the sidewalk. She was someone I knew, and, as I suspected, this was an absolute low point for her. She was homeless, had no access to a bathroom, and was struck by sickness that made expelling waste that much more urgent. She struggled with the shame and indignity of having no place to expel human waste. Fining her or jailing her would do nothing but make her life even more difficult.

This is an infrastructural problem, not a criminal one. A punitive response wastes resources better redirected to actual solutions, such as access to public restrooms.

Criminalizing an unavoidable action – the discharge human waste – only makes life harder for people who are desperately poor. Street Roots newspaper has covered how fines and fees drive people further into poverty. When we criminalize acts that are simply a result of being homeless, we are, sadly, making it even harder to exit homelessness.

**I urge you to reject HB 2959** because it makes life more difficult for people struggling with homelessness. We need compassionate and constructive responses instead.

Thank you for your work on the judiciary committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kaia Sand". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Kaia Sand  
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