

Oregon Coalition of Christian Voices

Testimony on House Joint Resolution 203
To House Revenue Committee, February 11, 2020

Chair Nathanson, Vice Chairs Reshke and Marsh, members of the committee;

My name is Karen Nettler, I am a board member of Oregon Coalition of Christian Voices (OCCV). We are a faith-based organization advocating for laws that look out for the well-being of all in our communities. Our faith tradition tells us to measure the success of our laws and policies by how well those most at risk are doing.

I drive I-205 in Portland most days, so most every day I see the tattered shelters of the houseless along the freeway. I never get used to it; on the contrary, I am increasingly distressed as I see what we as a society are tolerating. And they are just the most visible of so many in our communities who are experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity. That so many in our communities are without safe affordable homes is a violation of what is acceptable in a just and healthy society. We cannot afford to get used to it. We know we have an emergency.

You will likely hear from groups opposing this resolution, giving various reasons why it is a bad idea. Our faith traditions say that the prosperity of those with the most power and influence must not come at the expense of the most vulnerable. So we believe this is a good idea.

Should this resolution become law, those who are well-off enough to be affected by it will be no means experience an emergency. No, an emergency is when even those who are working full-time have no guarantee they will have enough income for housing. It *is* an emergency when children experience the trauma of unstable housing and frequent moves. It *is* an emergency when the disabled and elderly are unable to afford safe shelter, are living in tents, tarps, doorways, struggling to attend to their most basic health and hygiene needs.

We are grateful for the measures taken so far by government entities, and other groups such as non-profits and faith organizations to address this emergency. We support the effort evidenced in this resolution to bring all our citizens and groups to the table to be a part of the solution, for we are indeed one community, and when one of us is not well, none of us are well. We urge you to pass this resolution, an important step in restoring a measure of safety and dignity to our most vulnerable neighbors.

Respectfully submitted,

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