

To the Oregon House Committee On Judiciary:

As a person who has served our community experiencing houselessness for many years and have seen firsthand how sweeps negatively and in some cases fatally impact the lives of our most vulnerable, I support the passage of HB 2367, as it protects individuals' right to move freely, rest, sleep, pray and be protected in public space without discrimination. The right to rest is a basic human and civil right for all people and should not be considered a crime. Criminalizing people who are experiencing houselessness is not an effective solution to the complications that arise when people in our communities do not have a place to eat, rest or sleep.

I have a regular route of people I bring food and supplies to almost daily, who otherwise would not be able to eat a hot meal or have access to basic human needs due to the many barriers this City has failed to address. With the pandemic and the shelter in place order, where are these people to go when their camps are cruelly swept from underneath them with no plan in place to offer assistance beyond packing up their belongings, what little they have with no assurance they will get anything back, and in many cases with little to no warning. I've had campers return to their homes with everything just gone. I've stared at empty lots where just the day before I visited campers who I knew on a first name basis, and told them, "See you tomorrow!" unknowing they'd be swept early the next morning before I was even awake. This is not something I WANT to do, this is not something any of us should HAVE to do, but we are picking up the garbage the City has left for us without any help. This is YOUR garbage, not ours and not the campers. Sweeps kill and criminalizing those experiencing houselessness provides no purpose other than to please those who don't give a damn about other humans and just want them gone. They don't want to look at it so they sweep it under the rug, out of sight and out of mind. Why are we spending money to do the sweeps over and over again and criminalizing our vulnerable communities rather than fixing the root problem? Sweeps and jail aren't going to end houselessness. The root cause is poverty especially for our Black, Brown, Indigenous, Trans and Immigrant communities. So let's address that instead. You can find the money. You know what 2020 protests have been asking for this whole time. Let's redirect money from unwanted resources and put them towards what we really need for this City.

With more and more people in Oregon finding themselves houseless or on the verge of houselessness, our focus should be on expanding affordable housing capacity in the urban areas rather than punishing those who are houseless. We know that when all our neighbors have the opportunity to build foundations for economic stability, our communities and state thrive. Criminalizing lack of housing when we have not done enough in Oregon to ensure everyone has a stable place to call home narrows opportunities to escape houselessness and creates more barriers on the path to stability and prosperity.

HB 2367 would safeguard the dignity of those who already suffer from the burden of houselessness. I implore you to support this critical and life-saving legislation.