

On Thursday, March 4th, White Bird Clinic committed to endorsing the Oregon Right To Rest Act (HB 2367). We know from experience that the criminalization of homelessness harms our entire community: public funds drained by punitive measures and "clean-up" initiatives only deepen poverty by creating legal barriers to exiting homelessness.

Penalizing people for living in public when no other options are available is not a deterrent, it is cruel and unusual punishment. Saddling people living in extraordinarily difficult circumstances with fines they can not pay and criminal records that create additional barriers to housing and employment has not prevented homelessness in Lane County, it has created chronic homelessness on a scale unseen in other communities across the United States.

Our municipalities have invested enormous resources in the enforcement of anti-homeless laws (including policing, court processing costs, and incarceration). These policies are often enforced in a discriminatory manner and force people living unsheltered into unsafe and unsanitary situations where the risk of being attacked is increased. Sleep is essential to everyone's health, well-being, and ability to function. The lack of rest resulting from constant harassment exacerbates and causes physical and mental health issues.

Federal research confirms what many homeless community members already know: the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness has clearly stated that successful responses to homelessness must include an end to criminalization practices, as well as the provision of housing and supportive services. It is not enough to create housing, we must also prevent harm.

This bill does NOT give people the right to leave trash about, urinate in public, aggressively panhandle, block a doorway or passageway, or engage in destructive activities. This bill simply makes it legal for people to move freely, rest, sleep, protect themselves from the elements, eat and share food, and other basic acts necessary for human survival.

Please join White Bird Clinic in supporting the Oregon Right To Rest Act (HB 2367).