

Chair Fahey and members of the committee,

My name is Heather Sielicki. I'm a Eugene Human Rights Commissioner with a passion for whole systems approaches to Oregon's housing crisis. I work in the social services sector as the administrative operations coordinator for White Bird Clinic. I've spent the past decade working with community-based organizations, advocates, and legislators to improve conditions for people living unhoused and remove the barriers to exiting homelessness.

I come here today to speak in favor of house bill 3124 because it opens up two actionable, practical ways to reduce unintended harm from practices like "sweeps" and "move-alongs"

The first way it does this is by giving someone being displaced more time to find help to move their stuff and figure out an alternative shelter-in-place location. 24 hours notice does not give resource-limited community-based organizations sufficient time to render aid. 24 hours notice does not acknowledge the lack of support available on a weekend, even in our larger municipalities. Evicting people living under extraordinarily difficult circumstances with only one day's notice in the middle of a pandemic is disproportional to the severity of the crime committed and in fact has profound ramifications for a person experiencing homelessness individual's health.

The second-way house bill 3124 reduces unintended harm is by protecting the possessions of persons being displaced, treating them with the same respect given to the possessions of a person who is housed. White Bird was given the opportunity to re-use/recycle tents and other unclaimed items and had to decline. We could recognize them as supplies we'd purchased, with financial assistance from the City and United Way but the way the city stored the items made them impossible to salvage. The confiscating of a person's valuable possessions which often include medications, clothing, and important documents is disproportional to the severity of the crime committed by having nowhere to go and in fact, considerably lengthens the duration of time a person will spend literally homeless.

There is still considerable stigma and discrimination around mental health and poverty in our community. Homelessness is the most visible manifestation of this prejudice and the treatment against those who are homeless and Black or Latinx is far worse. House Bill 3124 will not fix this but it will reduce unintended harmful consequences while we work together to develop housing at the scope and scale this state of housing and homelessness emergency requires. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this legislation.