

To the Committee,

I have been in Lane County nearly five years, and it has been a great disappointment to see the way that local governments here harass and displace homeless individuals. When I lived in Las Cruces, NM, the town ran a UN Model program: a 50-site camp with soup kitchen, sanitary facilities, health facilities, transportation, and social workers all on-site. It was a priority to get individuals stable and supported so that they could enter housing with the resources they needed to stay housed. I wish for the state to support such programs in Oregon on a larger scale, but Right to Rest is a good start.

Current practices are problematic for several reasons. When police are sent to evict homeless individuals, they often cause trauma and anxiety by their interactions. Few people can move all of their belongings in the allotted time and often lose hundreds of dollars in property--which City of Eugene claims to store but I have seen put in dumpsters. The one site allocated now for sheltering/camping is a) not large enough to accommodate the homeless population and b) inappropriately aggregating people by forcing them to choose between extremely close quarters or police harassment. Individuals being evicted have asked police where they should go to be in compliance and been told "just not here." Eugene has closed the parks, open spaces, and riparian corridors without offering the fairgrounds, unused community centers, or large right of ways. We need to prioritize more land, with trash service and toilets, so our neighbors have a reliable place to set up. The pandemic may present an extra risk to people living without adequate resources, but dozens of people die every year in Eugene from exposure. I support the right to rest, so that our houseless neighbors can be reached for services, sleep without fear of state reprimand, and transition to easy, safer circumstances in town.