

TO: Members of the Senate Committee on Health Care - Senator Deb Patterson, Chair; Senator Tim Knopp, Vice Chair; and Senators Lee Beyer, Dallas Heard, James Manning Jr.

I am writing to convey strong support of Senate Bill 850. This Bill would require that reports of death indicates the housing status of the decedent.

#### REASONS TO SUPPORT SB 850:

- Alignment with Police Department audit findings: The draft assessment report of the Salem Police Department identifies the need for tracking and analyzing more data. "We cannot overstate the importance of using proper data collection and analyses to achieve efficiency in the department. Collecting and analyzing data would help the department enhance safety for law enforcement personnel and community members who work collaboratively with SPD personnel, as well as contribute to improved decision making, situational awareness, productivity, efficiency, transparency and collaboration with partner agencies," the report said." (Salem Reporter, March 12,2021.)

- Enables more informed decisions: Tracking data on crimes, deaths, and calls for service enables leaders to identify trends, needs, and gaps, and enables more informed decisions about where, when and how to use resources.

- Identifies possible disparities or discrimination: Data tracking and analysis can help to identify whether some demographics are dying or being policed at a disproportionate rate.

- Enables more effective services and collaboration: Tracking and sharing aggregate data about crimes, services, and deaths enables better collaborations with other agencies.

- Reflects how poverty, policies, and rules play out in real life: Laws and policies can enable more ease or more challenges, and some enable more ease in theory and have the opposite effect in practice. Homeless individuals are already living in extreme poverty, as they struggle in survival mode with not enough housing, services, and supports to meet basic human needs. Tracking deaths can help to identify how policies and rules are playing out in real life, real lives.

- Reflects some dignity and humanity: So many people who are homeless are treated daily as if they are vermin or invisible with no understanding of the effort and work involved for them to get up another day to find somewhere to be while often being chased away; to exist with crisis and traumas; to create some semblance of self and home-ness from nothing; to find some shred of hope to carry on; to struggle daily with basic survival. Warriors who are likely to be overlooked, underestimated, and considered not worthy of our time to hear the stories in their eyes, their tears, their smiles, wrinkles, or their years. So many are starved for just being seen as an equitable human being, where a smile and hello is a treasure worth almost everything.

Tracking homeless deaths provides some humanity and dignity to homeless individuals who often live in horrific and inhumane poverty, with disabilities and declining health, and so often die alone, unnoticed, in anonymity. We can do better than that, and the first step is knowing how many people are dying outside. So far, we track their deaths by word of mouth, and many more people are dying than we know of through the grapevine. These are the people I know of who died during this last year or so:

Chris Rice • Montana Wayne Carver • Theresa Hennen • Monni Braff • Janeen Marie Dewey • Robyn Gonzalez • Michael Reves • Roy McCune • Brian Jackman • Scotty Parker • Kevin

I knew three of these ladies, and their struggles will haunt me always. I look for their stars in the evening skies, hoping they have found some peace.

For each of them, and for the countless unknown and anonymous deaths, please support SB 850, so we have the data to do better, and so we honor so many unknown lives by giving them some semblance of humanity and dignity by acknowledging their deaths.

Thank you for your consideration.

Lynelle Wilcox