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Oregon Senate

Committee On Housing And Development

e-Mail

Attention: Senator Kayse Jama, Chair
Senator Dennis Linthicum, Vice Chair
Senator Dick Anderson, Member
Senator Jeff Golden, Member
Senator Debb Patterson, Member

Re: HB 2583 A, An explanation, and a defense;
WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Sponsors:
Representative Julie Fahey, Chief
Representative Wlnsvey Campos
Representative Maxine Dexter
Representative Pam Marsh
Representative Lily Morgan

Dear Honorable Committee Members and Sponsors:

In a little heralded local political action, in the year 2019 I wrote and campaigned for the following language at the Multnomah Democratic Platform convention:

“We support housing standards for all new construction of permanent dwellings: Any permanent dwelling shall house a maximum of two (2) adults per 400 square feet.”¹

¹ Multnomah Democratic Party [biennial] Platform. (2020). Article I, Legislative Action Item 18.

Our party wanted to support houseless people because doing so activates our mission statement: “Empowering People.” Portland suffers from homelessness it was bad in 2019 and it is worse now. The COVID-19 pandemic made things worse – as you know.

The popular solution for houselessness invokes the boiling cauldron “Tiny House Movement.”

Please open your historic mind’s eye to the American author and observer Jacob Riis’s landmark historic social welfare book, *How The Other Half Lives*,² as he clearly shows the overcrowding and concomitant deaths in late 19th Century New York City. Author Jacob Riis was righteously indignant that the city fathers were somehow blinded by the wretched filth outside City Hall. If it happened in Portland, wouldn’t you be too?

You should be.

Everyone should reject cramming any more than two adults into less than 400 square feet – for ANY reason: inside or outside prisons or mental wards – not only your neighbors who are just like you – or could be.

As a disabled, elderly, low-income single adult gender-apparent white Jewish man, I barely have enough room in my tiny studio of the same size (400 square feet) to accommodate an easy life, one that I earned. This Portland apartment building, 15 stories (number 13 is unlucky so it is not missing) hosts 286 habitable units, homes somewhere around 300 souls owned; by Woods East, LP owned by Wells Fargo (nee) Home Forward (nee) Housing Authority of Portland.

One ultimately finds instant bill astounding. It purports to relieve gender and national identity hurtfulness only to wind up squashing hot, sweaty, hardworking migrant farm workers into all metal mobile homes with inadequate hygiene facilities, lack of decent garbage removal, sufficient number of toilets, showers, sinks and tubs or laundry provisions.

One must question the presence of ventilation (heating and cooling of 21st Century grade) fire sprinklers, transportation and then see rack beds like concentration camps of the Holocaust.

There you have it – the yard stick for habitation should also say what I wrote a few years ago that is also *supported by international standards*.³

² Riis, Jacob A. (1890, 1971). *How the other half lives*. Dover Publishing Company, NYC. ISBN 0-486-22012-5.

³ Ching, Francis D.K. and Steven B. Winkle (2018). *Building Codes Illustrated, 6th Ed.* John Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, NJ, and Canada.

DO NOT LET the slum lords win because they are disgusting and creepy narcissists who derive their “supply” from the tearful eyes and terror of crying little boys and girls looking for their mommies and daddies. Such chutzpah!

Insert, I pray you, my words of housing standards: “We support housing standards for all new construction of permanent dwellings ... [each] shall house a maximum of two (2) adults per 400 square feet” (presuming a floor to ceiling height of eight and one-half feet (8.5 feet)) as the yardstick for a world repaired.

Sincerely yours,



Neil H. Goodman, Precinct Committee Person
Multnomah Democratic Party
Lead Researcher, Basic Needs and Rights Study Group