

Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden and Members of the Senate Committee on Health Care,

My name is Lindsay Bigelow, and I am writing in support of SB1076. Having spent the past several years volunteering and advocating for those experiencing homelessness in our community I have seen too many instances of people being discharged from the hospital unable to care for themselves and wearing nothing but the paper clothing provided by the hospital. Several months ago one of our fellow advocates worked with a local nonprofit to stock a clothing closet to ensure those being discharged have weather appropriate clothing, yet just this morning I was contacted after a friend saw a man in distress walking away from the hospital wearing only paper clothing, no shoes, no coat, nothing but the paper clothing.

In January 2021 an unsheltered community member's tent started on fire with him inside. He was able to get to the hospital, his burns were treated and he was discharged a few short hours later with instructions to keep his burns covered in clean bandages and follow up with his primary care physician. We were able to work with a local nonprofit to get him into a hotel while he recuperated as he most certainly would have perished had he been left in the elements in the middle of winter unable to care for himself or follow the hospital's instructions on his burn care. Had he had private insurance I cannot help but believe he would have been admitted to the hospital.

Often, we are seeing these individuals discharged in the middle of the night when there is absolutely nowhere to go. We are aware there are some respite/transitional beds available in Salem, however the hospital cannot refer to these programs outside of regular business hours, yet the hospital refuses to keep individuals until a social worker is available during these business hours.

I recognize this bill won't fix everything, but it will help save lives across the state. I cannot speak for other communities, but I can assure you there are several nonprofit organizations and volunteers who want to see more collaboration with the hospital to help prevent these horrific conditions from continuing. We are facing a humanitarian crisis and we are seeing more and more individuals facing homelessness; the elderly, young adults aging out of the foster care system, those who struggle with severe and persistent mental illness, those who are receiving services for an intellectual/developmental disability, those who do not have a support system and struggle to care for themselves under the best of circumstances. These are our community members, our loved ones, they have value and this bill may just help save their lives. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Lindsay Bigelow

