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On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure: HB3501

Portland has an issue of chronic homelessness, there is no way to deny it. It is not unlike many cities that suffer from a chronic homelessness problem, although there are some factors in Portland that are seeming to make it a bit worse than in other metropolitan areas.

Some of the core factors that can impact the rate of homelessness are:

- * When Housing is Out of Reach. More than at any other time, there is a lack of housing that low-income people can afford. ...
- * Income and Housing Affordability. ...
- * Connecting Homelessness and Mental Health. ...
- * Chronic addiction ...
- * Escaping Violence. ...
- * Impact of Racial Disparities.

This testimony does not attempt to address reducing those factors but moreover attempts to address actions to take and policy regarding specific segments of the homeless population.

I would like to focus on some specific population-based aspects mentioned in that list specifically because in my opinion it is our society's duty to address those populations with the direct action of removing individuals from a life of hopelessness and despair on the streets in the name of compassion and placing them into protective care.

1. Minors
2. The Chronically Addicted
3. The Severely Mentally Ill

Human agency refers to the ability of an individual or a group of individuals to act intentionally and make choices that shape their own lives and the world around them. It involves the capacity to exercise control over one's thoughts, behaviors, and environment, and to make decisions that reflect one's own values, beliefs, and desires. Human agency is a fundamental aspect of human identity and is closely related to concepts such as autonomy, free will, and responsibility. It is what allows individuals to take ownership of their lives and to influence the course of their own development and that of society as a whole.

I don't want our society to allow the severely mentally ill, chronically addicted, or children to live anywhere they choose and to fend for themselves like animals once they have lost the ability to make decisions that reflect one's own values, beliefs, and desires and are driven by unhealthy or destructive drives. That lacks compassion and care both for those individuals and the communities that are forced to adapt when they are occupied by these individuals. People who are severely mentally ill/ highly addicted have lost the agency to know or manage emotions and actions. It lacks compassion to let them fend for themselves and choose to live destructively.

The severely mentally ill, chronically addicted, and children should not be given a choice because they are not able to make objective, responsible, and adult choices for their own safety, and the communities they occupy should not be forced to adapt and interact with these individuals without the appropriate training.

An approach to this that could help in my mind is to provide the ability of compassionate, highly trained field professionals the ability to triage individuals who are involved in incidents where conflict or behaviors may lead that professional to believe that the individual falls into a situation where the agency does not exist and to put that person into proactive care immediately.