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On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure: HB3501

The proposed Right to Rest Act in Oregon, House Bill 3501, which aims to decriminalize camping in public places, is a misguided and dangerous piece of legislation that would have significant negative consequences for communities across the state.

If this bill were to pass, homeless individuals would have the right to camp anywhere they choose, regardless of the impact on public spaces or the surrounding communities. This means that parks, sidewalks, and other public spaces would become de facto campgrounds, with no ability for local authorities to regulate or limit such activities.

One of the primary concerns with the Right to Rest Act is the impact it would have on public health and safety. Homeless encampments often lack basic sanitation facilities and can become breeding grounds for disease, including infectious diseases like tuberculosis and hepatitis. Allowing individuals to camp anywhere they please without any form of regulation or oversight would create a public health crisis and could lead to the spread of disease and illness.

Additionally, the presence of homeless encampments in public spaces can create significant safety hazards. For example, unattended fires, drug use, and other dangerous activities can pose risks to both the homeless individuals themselves and the surrounding community. Moreover, encampments often lead to increased crime and drug use in the surrounding areas, creating additional safety concerns for residents and visitors alike.

The proposed Right to Rest Act also ignores the impact that homeless encampments can have on local businesses and tourism. Encampments can be unsightly, disruptive, and may discourage people from visiting local businesses and public spaces. This can have a significant impact on the local economy and the quality of life for residents.

Finally, the Right to Rest Act would place an undue burden on local law enforcement and first responders. With no ability to regulate homeless encampments, police and emergency services would be forced to respond to incidents in public spaces, diverting resources away from other critical public safety activities.

In conclusion, the proposed Right to Rest Act in Oregon would have significant negative consequences for public health, safety, and the local economy. While it is

important to address the issue of homelessness, this bill is not the solution. Local authorities must have the ability to regulate public spaces and ensure the safety and well-being of all members of the community.