

Submitter: Concerned Voter

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure: HB3501

This proposal may be well intentioned to support the less fortunate but ultimately will harm this population in need more than help them. There are real solutions to homelessness: prevention (affordable housing, living wages, better access to mental health services), shelters, and helping people get off drugs, access mental health services, get jobs with living wages, and secure housing, etc. But people refuse shelters because they don't want to get help with mental health issues or stop using drugs. The more comfortable we make the option of not getting help, the less tempting the option of getting help becomes. So when you make it easier to camp, you're making it easier to avoid getting help, which is inhumane.

You might not see their suffering as much when behind a tent, but it is still very hazardous. There are fires, women may be taken advantage of more easily, it's easier to use drugs without being seen, hypothermia still occurs, and it takes longer to identify if someone is being harmed or having a health emergency. Make no illusions that you are making it "safe" to live on the streets by encouraging a thin fabric to cover up real human suffering.

My sister had a mental health crisis and went out to live on the streets because she would rather do that than accept mental health treatment. We feared for her life daily. Finally, due to the discomfort of living on the streets, she accepted treatment and is now living in her own apartment with treatment and in a much better state. We need to put all our resources to making the transition off the streets better, not making it easier to avoid getting help!