

Submitter: Sergio Crespo

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure: HB3501

This measure seems to place the burden of homelessness on the shoulders of society for the small minority of persons who have severe mental illness, drug addiction, and/or have made poor choices in their lives. The argument that is easier to find the homeless if they live in public spaces is failed for many reasons. First, dispersing homeless to all the corners of public spaces presents logistical challenges in being able to provide effective care and outreach to those most in need. We simply don't have the manpower or the financial desire and power to do so. Providing services to homeless is best done with centralized care and outreach services as they do in modern societies, most notably the Netherlands where public space camping is prohibited and enforced but where a robust drug rehab, mental health care, etc are offered by centralized service in shelters and sanctioned living spaces. Do you see homeless tents in the Tuileries in Paris? Common spaces in Japan? The town plaza of Porto and Lisbon? Do these places have homeless? No and yes of course there are homeless. However, they enforce the sanctity of public space and use for all while not alienating or abandoning the needs of the homeless. This measure supposes there is no way to address homeless other than allowing them to camp in any space. This supposition lacks creativity and more importantly does not take any consideration on the impacts to other members of society who have the same right of use of public space. This measure devalues the rights of other citizens, including children who have the right to play in a park free of homeless encampments and their often-associated unsanitary conditions including needles, feces, etc. Will state and local government hold individuals who are allowed to camp in the public sphere accountable for maintaining sanitary conditions in and around their campsite. Will the states and local government hold individuals accountable for public use of drugs in public spaces and public intoxication such as parks adjacent to schools? These questions need to be addressed and outlined with clear boundaries and expectations of behavior before we even consider a legalization of public space use as a domicile. Who is protecting my sons right to clean and safe public space when he goes to Grant Park and plays? Who is at fault when a child becomes ill because of unsanitary conditions in public spaces? Furthermore, our children and disabled persons should also have guaranteed access to public spaces such as sidewalks. Allowing protected camping on to public spaces such as sidewalks forces children to walk in busy the street or directs the blind person to walk in a street when camping is allowed without prohibition. My own child told me he had to walk onto a busy street as the sidewalk was completely blocked by tents in Portland this week. Please do not confuse my opposition to this measure as anti-homeless. I strongly believe the homeless deserve more from society. They deserve a warm bed, a meal, and care to address the often-associated addictions and mental health. I am strong

opinion, however, that homeless individuals be given a better, safer, more sanitary option that provides centralized comprehensive care. This level of care is clearly not achievable by the results of our current failed policies. It's time to try something different and this measure codifies the current standard. This measure is testament to giving up on solutions that we can all live with, including the homeless.