

Submitter: Dale Bengtson
On Behalf Of: Myself
Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness
Measure: HB3501

I appreciate the plight of the unhoused. It's clear that a plan needs to be developed to address the growing problem. HB3501 is not that plan, nor is it a plan at all. It is an attempt to legislate chaos that will not serve the unhoused population nor the greater community in any positive way.

The city of Portland and many other places in Oregon are over-run with campers. These campers often block sidewalks and other public rights-of-way so that it's common to need to walk in the street to get around. Disturbingly often, they come with trash, crime, drug use and other issues that make our neighborhoods undesirable places to be. It's easy to say that those are separate issues, but daily experience argues otherwise. The crime and other factors are driving businesses to close. As a result, Portland is becoming less desirable, and people are moving away if they can. Newcomers are increasingly hesitant to move in. That vicious cycle will be accelerated if the campers are given increased impunity to do whatever they choose wherever they choose.

All of this is being allowed to happen in the name of human rights. As a voter, a taxpayer and a property owner, I must ask what has happened to my rights? My right to walk in my own neighborhood without having to deal with the trash and crime? As businesses and homeowners exercise their rights to leave, there will be fewer left to support the infrastructure that everyone relies on.

There are a number of state and local, public and private programs working to get the unhoused the services they need. It's hard, and no one has the complete answer. But centralized programs have the ability to create a critical mass of people who can work together to build the essentials of modern life: indoor plumbing, shelter from the elements, food security, a feeling of community. This is the kind of human rights that should be the objective. Coordinating and bolstering these efforts is where our legislative energy should be spent.

HB3501 does not contribute to a plan to help disadvantaged people get out of their situations. It works against other efforts by encouraging people to spread out where they're harder to reach and it's more difficult to offer the necessary services. The measure will pull us all down while not lifting anyone up.

I therefore strongly oppose this measure.