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Written Testimony – HB 3501

Public Hearing, May 4th, 8 a.m.

The Revitalize Portland Coalition is the voice of the commercial real estate industry, the largest single industry in Portland’s downtown. Our twenty member organizations represent a workforce of over 8000 individual members across Oregon. RPC members believe Portland must see rapid improvement in 4 crucial areas to succeed: Homelessness, Public Image, Crime & Public Safety, and Economic Development & Housing. To find solutions and support the community that they love, they bring hands-on experience in land-use, property development & management, finance, logistics, just to name a few.

Our region faces an addiction crisis and mental health crisis, all while we are in a law enforcement crisis. Yet, we are in a government crisis over how to move on all these matters together. Homelessness needs to be addressed and combatted by our government comprehensively and on a grand scale. The Coalition believes all efforts should be laser-focused on reducing homelessness in the Portland metropolitan area. We should not be satisfied until no one must live in inhumane conditions on our streets.

RPC respectfully opposes HB 3501 and believes adding the proposed language to the statutes is a mistake. RPC is concerned that this bill will overly burden our cities and counties who are already struggling.

The proposed language is vague and will create many more problems than it might solve. It is also not needed. The bill would prohibit “harassment” which is defined in part as “seriously alarming.” It would also allow individuals to rest in public spaces so long as they do not “obstruct” pedestrians or vehicles.

Only lawyers can love these ambiguous terms. There is no need for these special protections from criminal prosecution as law enforcement and district attorneys are already exercising discretion in not arresting and prosecuting illegal campers.

Meanwhile, the ambiguities in the bill are an invitation to endlessly vexatious lawsuits.

In addition, this legislature has already passed 2 pieces of legislation to ensure that cities and counties comply with a series of recent federal court rulings.

We respectfully request that you vote no on HB 3501.

Revitalizing the Portland-metro region as a welcoming and vibrant community for residents, visitors, and businesses by supporting public policies and collaborative efforts to address the challenges of public safety, homelessness, livability, and economic vitality.