

Submitter: SARAH COMERFORD
On Behalf Of: myself and my family
Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness
Measure: HB3501

Dear Chair Dexter, Vice Chairs Gamba and Helfrich, and members of the House Committee on Housing and Homelessness,

I am writing today in support of HB 3501, the Oregon Right to Rest bill, because I and my family believe our unsheltered neighbors deserve dignity and a life free from debasement and harassment by individuals in our state who privilege property values over human life. Frankly, the number of testimonies in opposition of this measure are appalling, but I can't say that the general pearl-clutching fear response represented in those testimonies is surprising. People fear what they do not understand, and the unfortunate truth is that many Oregonians continue to put stock in out-moded, rigid puritanical views of moralism, prosperity gospel, and other belief systems that wrongfully place responsibility for broken social systems on the individuals who suffer the impacts of those systemic failures.

My own family has been affected by homelessness, and though we have been extremely fortunate to have secure housing since moving to Oregon in 2019, the long-lasting effects of having experienced homelessness in the past never subside. I respectfully submit to the Committee that any individual who themselves has experienced living on the streets, or who has a loved-one living on the streets, would not dismiss this measure so callously, and to consider this perspective when hearing testimonies in opposition. And to those who so grievously guard their moral high ground on the issue, I would say this: there but by the grace of God go I, and you, and every one we know. In these uncertain times, it takes very little to lose everything--is it not the place of government, of collective society, to provide a safety net in these circumstances? To safeguard our dignity?

Thank you,
-sarah comerford, M.A.