

Submitter: Phoenix Oaks

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure: HB3501

Please take steps to make sure the Oregon Right to Rest Act as soon as possible. It is needed to protect basic human rights and allow everyone to exist in public without criminalization.

There is no need to criminalize unhoused folks for doing human things like sitting or lying in public. Such criminalization is cruel, traumatizing, a waste of taxpayer dollars that makes unsheltered homelessness actually cost more per person than providing housing, and simply counterproductive to solving our homelessness crisis. When someone has a criminal record, it becomes much harder to find housing or work. People who lack housing don't need to be stuck with fines they can't afford or jail time. The vicious cycle from the streets, to jail, to hospitals, and back to the streets needs to be put to a stop now.

What those facing homelessness do need are more resources in the form of affordable housing, rent assistance, adequate shelter spaces, tiny home villages, affordable RV and mobile home parks, hygiene facilities, food assistance, low-barrier jobs, healthcare, addiction recovery services, and more mental health resources. Unhoused folks include many diverse people, including veterans, seniors, people with disabilities, domestic violence victims, frontline workers who have been priced out of housing, LGBTQ+ youths who have been rejected by their families, and transgender people fleeing to Oregon from states that have restricted their basic right to exist in society as who they are.

We need to move in the direction of healing, not retraumatizing people. We need to move in the direction of enacting real solutions that get people off the streets, not dehumanizing measures designed to sweep people out of sight and out of mind as if their lives have no value. Moving in the right direction is a win-win for everyone: those facing homelessness, communities, businesses, and taxpayers.

It is past time we change our approach to addressing homelessness to a humane one. The Oregon Right to Rest Act would be a critical step in that direction.

Thank you for your consideration.