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On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure: HB3501

Hi, friends.

This bill seems disconnected from reality. Human beings create environments, which are the basis for the range of decisions and outcomes based on those decisions. For example, if we light our home on fire, the range of choices changes dramatically than if was unburned. It is not a rational decision to watch Netflix inside a fire-engulfed home. Rational decisions would be to flee the home or attempt to put out the fire.

While homeless people have a right to exist - they have to be a citizen of the state to 'own' State property. And they do not exclusively own that state property. So, they must show residency, which includes financial independence, voting registration, domicile requirements, driver's license or identification, and income statement.

Public means public. So, if people camp on a public space (for example, the sidewalk), they are barring anyone else's use of that property - effectively stealing from others. People I know go to school in downtown Portland. They have to dodge people urinating, tents on the sidewalk, and the drug-addled. Because of this environment of semi-lawlessness, they don't feel comfortable staying late after class and may ask security to escort them. Last summer, a drug house opened up in an unoccupied commercial space, and customers sprawled 30 feet from the entrance near the school. Students had to traverse across that at least twice a day. It would be foolish to think that parents aren't considering that when deciding where to send their children.

Creating an environment where the majority of the public doesn't feel comfortable in the public space reduces foot traffic. Businesses that rely on foot traffic wither and leave. Without business revenue, the state cannot meet its financial obligations - which include caring for the people who are so disadvantaged that they have to live in tents. The passage of this bill is at odds with creating a business environment that generates the revenue to meet the state's obligations. Governor Kotek already has a difficult task to entice businesses to invest in Oregon - especially high-tech ones that might take advantage of the CHIPS act. We've seen this with the downtown Portland exodus. Do we want this to be a statewide phenomenon?

What Oregon needs is a goal for what communities should ideally look like and then tailor policies to meet those goals. With regard to people in homelessness, it should be focused on more offramps to homelessness and fewer onramps. Offramps would

look like transition spaces like the Open House Ministries resident program. Broadly legalizing camping in public spaces is a large onramp and encourages homelessness.

Semper Fidelis,  
Rodger