

Submitter: Steven Birch

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure: HB3501

As a lifelong Oregonian, and Portlander since 1984, I, like countless others have watched the homeless camping and with that piles of garbage and ruined green spaces grow and grow over the last many years.

Homelessness is obviously a serious issue that affects individuals and communities across the United States. However, allowing homeless individuals to camp on sidewalks and in parks is not a sustainable solution to this problem. In Portland, this practice has become increasingly common, with many individuals setting up tents and other makeshift shelters in public spaces. While it is understandable that these individuals may have nowhere else to go, this practice has serious negative consequences.

Firstly, allowing homeless camping in public spaces can create a public health and safety hazard. The unsanitary conditions of these camps can lead to the spread of diseases and pests, putting both the homeless individuals and nearby residents at risk. Furthermore, homeless camps almost always attract criminal activity, including drug use and violence, which can endanger the entire community.

Secondly, homeless camping in public spaces can damage the environment and infrastructure. Tents and other makeshift shelters can damage grass and vegetation in parks and create litter and waste that is difficult and expensive to clean up. This negatively impacts the quality of life for residents and harm local wildlife.

Finally, allowing homeless camping in public spaces can create an overall sense of disorder and chaos. This can harm local businesses and deter tourists from visiting the area, further exacerbating the economic challenges already faced by the community.

While homelessness is a complex issue that requires a multifaceted solution, allowing homeless camping on sidewalks and in parks in Portland, Oregon is not a viable solution. The negative impacts on public health and safety, the environment, and the overall community far outweigh any potential benefits. Instead, the community must come together to develop and implement more sustainable and effective solutions to support homeless individuals and address the root causes of homelessness.

And I'm not even addressing the harassment lawsuits nightmare that this will pile on top of the mess we're in right now. The Portland police and court system are already

overwhelmed by the situation we're in now, how would anyone realistically consider this even remotely doable?

Aside from this further contributing to Portland becoming a less and less desirable place to live (which breaks my heart), I strongly feel that bills like HB 3501 are going to make it harder to re-elect a Democratic Governor – as well as Democratic Representatives – and I think we can all see how someone like a DeSantis or Abbott run their states; is that really what most Oregonians want?