

Submitter: Alicia Corwin

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure: HB3501

I am writing as a concerned resident of Portland and citizen of Oregon deeply troubled by House Bill 3501. This bill is a misguided and harmful attempt to address the complex and multifaceted issue of homelessness in Oregon, which would create a nightmare scenario for our state. Here are some reasons why HB 3501 should be opposed and rejected by the Oregon legislature and the public:

1) HB 3501 Violates the Rights of Other Citizens

By giving homeless people unlimited and unrestricted access to public spaces, HB 3501 infringes on the rights of other citizens who pay taxes and abide by the law. Public spaces are meant to be shared by everyone, not monopolized by a few. Homeless encampments often pose health and safety risks, such as fire hazards, drug use, crime, violence, littering, and disease. They also create nuisances and disturbances for nearby residents and businesses, who have to deal with noise, odor, vandalism, trespassing, and harassment. By allowing homeless people to sue for \$1,000 if they are asked to leave or move along, HB 3501 creates a perverse incentive for them to stay put and resist any efforts to help them find better alternatives. This bill effectively gives homeless people legal protection to do as they please in public spaces, while stripping other citizens of their own rights to use these same spaces.

2) HB 3501 Does Not Address the Root Causes of Homelessness

Decriminalizing homelessness does not solve homelessness. It only enables it. Homelessness is not a choice, but a result of economic hardship, a shortage of affordable housing, mental illness, substance abuse, domestic violence, and other factors. Simply allowing homeless people to camp anywhere they want does not address these underlying causes or provide them with the resources and support they need to improve their situation. In fact, it will worsen their condition by isolating them from society and discouraging them from seeking help. HB 3501 does not offer any solutions or funding for increasing shelter capacity, expanding affordable housing options, providing mental health and addiction treatment, or creating employment and education opportunities for homeless people. It merely shifts the responsibility and burden from the government to the public.

3) HB 3501 Undermines the Efforts of Local Governments and Organizations

Local communities are trying to find humane and effective ways to deal with

homelessness. HB 3501 would undermine efforts such as Portland's Homelessness/Urban Camping Impact Reduction Program and Eugene's Rest Stop Program by overriding local authority and creating a one-size-fits-all policy that does not take into account the diverse needs and circumstances of different regions.

HB 3501 is a terrible piece of legislation that entrenches the failed status quo of homelessness in Oregon. It sends a clear message that Oregon is a haven for homeless people, where they can camp anywhere they want without any accountability or consequences. This would only attract more homeless people from other states and exacerbate the problem. Instead of passing this bill, Oregon should focus on finding real solutions that address the needs of both homeless people and other citizens.