

My parents owned the home I grew up here in Eugene, and it was a place of stability, grounding and shelter that I often took for granted. After over 15 years of social justice organizing and practicing as a healthcare provider out of state, my sibling, partner and I moved back to Eugene early in the pandemic. It's been alarming to see the ways that college town gentrification, the not-in-my-backyard classism and racism, years of national dis-investment from public and affordable housing, coupled with the climate-crisis induced fires this fall have created an untenable housing crisis. The city's response to this crisis has been to criminalize poverty and homelessness—attacking people's basic right to rest, sit, sleep, eat, and move freely within public spaces. While criminalization disproportionately harms poor people, people of color and disabled people, it negatively impacts our entire community. I pass by Washington Jefferson park and other encampments daily to provide healthcare for poor and working class Eugenians, a number of whom are marginally housed, unhoused, or one crisis away from joining the growing number of unhoused residents. I am seeing the material impact of housing-related stressors on my patients' physical and mental health on a daily basis. Living in a city that systematically neglects shelter as a basic human right disrupts the moral and economic fabric of our city, and it is our collective responsibility to come up with actual solutions that work for all of us. HB2367-- The Right to Rest Act--protects our unhoused neighbors and their right sleep and move freely within public spaces without discrimination, citation, arrest and harassment based on their unhoused status. This bill would provide us with the initial steps to stop the harm against our unhoused neighbors, and begin to repair the broken fabric of our city.