



Mid-Willamette Valley
COMMUNITY ACTION
Compassion in Motion

9 March 2021

For the record, my name is Laurel Dixon, and I am here today on behalf of the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency, a nonprofit dedicated to serving those in poverty in Marion and Polk Counties. Thank you for the opportunity to address the House. I'm here to speak in favor of House Bill 3115. When we treat people who are unhoused like a problem to be solved, when we deny them human dignity by adopting "hardline" tactics and all-out banning them from public spaces, how much of our own humanity do we lose? Aggressive, sweeping laws that forbid camping on all public land or sitting on public sidewalks are unjust. Such bans have always been punitive and morally questionable, but in the midst of a pandemic, during an ever-worsening housing crisis, how can we in good conscience argue that they are acceptable? They do not confer dignity to our unhoused community members. From a purely practical standpoint, they don't even address the issue they claim to solve—after all, banning unhoused folks from public spaces won't reduce the number of people who are unhoused. It will merely punish them for being homeless, shuffling them from one public space to another in an effort to remove the problem of homelessness from the public eye.

That is why I would like to voice our full support for House Bill 3115. Stipulating that local governments be "objectively reasonable" when regulating how people live outdoors allows room for interpretation and flexibility, which helps the local government create regional policies that are appropriate for their specific region. It also offers recourse for unhoused people to respond when they are targeted by restrictive bans. When we forsake a nuanced approach to policy-making and instead adopt a harsh, all-or-nothing stance, we often harm our most vulnerable community members—like those who are homeless—in the process. Treating people like a problem to be solved ignores their inherent worth as human beings. Please vote yes on 3115, and vote to return to nuance and reason in regulating public spaces.