

TO: Members of the Senate Committee on Health Care - Senator Deb Patterson, Chair; Senator Tim Knopp, Vice Chair; and Senators Lee Beyer, Dallas Heard, James Manning Jr.

I am writing to convey strong support of Senate Bill 850. This Bill would require that reports of death indicates the housing status of the decedent.

SB 850 is sponsored by Senator Deb Patterson and Representative Winsvey Campos as Chief Sponsors, and by Senators Kate Lieber and Kathleen Taylor, and Representatives Pam Marsh, Courtney Neron, Ricki Ruiz, and Anna Williams.

REASONS TO SUPPORT SB 850:

- Alignment with Police Department audit findings: SB 850 aligns closely with key findings of the recent independent audit of the Salem Police Department's policies, practices, and procedures. The draft report identifies the need for the Police Department to track and analyze more data. "We cannot overstate the importance of using proper data collection and analyses to achieve efficiency in the department. Collecting and analyzing data would help the department enhance safety for law enforcement personnel and community members who work collaboratively with SPD personnel, as well as contribute to improved decision making, situational awareness, productivity, efficiency, transparency and collaboration with partner agencies," the report said." (Salem Reporter, March 12,2021.)
- Enables more informed decisions: Tracking crime, deaths, and calls for service data enables leaders to identify trends, needs, and gaps, and enables more informed decisions about where, when and how to use resources.
- Identifies possible discrimination: Data tracking and analysis enables leaders to determine whether some demographics are dying or being policed at a disproportionate rate, and builds transparency.
- Enables more effective services and collaboration: Tracking and sharing aggregate data about crimes, services, and deaths enables better collaborations with other agencies that serve different segments of Salem's population.
- Reflects how policies and rules play out in real life: A public reporting requirement to reflect whether someone died homeless in Oregon reflects slivers of extreme poverty and shows a piece of the reality that people are dying in the streets, as they struggle in survival mode with not enough housing, services, and supports to meet basic human needs.
- Reflects some dignity and humanity: A public reporting requirement to reflect whether someone died homeless in Oregon also reflects humanity. So many people who are homeless on the streets are treated daily as if they are vermin or invisible. So many are likely to be looked down on with no understanding of the effort and work involved for them to get up another day to find somewhere to exist while often being chased away; to exist with crisis and traumas; to create some semblance of self and home-ness from nothing; to find some shred of hope to carry on; to struggle daily with basic survival. Warriors.

So many people living on the streets are likely to be overlooked, underestimated, and considered not worthy of our time to hear the stories in their eyes, their tears, their smiles, wrinkles, or their years. So many people living on the streets are starved for just being seen as an equitable human being, where a smile and hello is a treasure worth almost everything.

We so often fail them in life, and we need to do better in so many directions. So far, we track their deaths by word of mouth, and many more people are dying than we know of through the grapevine. Real data enables a more accurate picture and a way to at least acknowledge individuals' lives and deaths, and data enables paths to help us figure out how to do better in the future.

We know more people have died on the streets than I've heard of so far. These people die without even the dignity of a roof over their heads. Their deaths should be acknowledged in some way.