

I am an advocate of choosing to help others rather than criminalize at all times, but the timing of this bill is particularly apt for this year for Oregon. In light of the pandemic people losing their jobs, unable to pay for rent, we supported and passed an eviction moratorium, and even extended it to the end of June. This shows that Oregon understands the importance of needing a place to stay and not getting kicked out during challenging times, but also is presenting a situation where many more Oregonians are likely to become unhoused come June 30th. This past year also saw devastating wildfires across the state, and in the wake of that disaster, FEMA denied about 57% of the federal disaster relief that was applied for. That means of the 24,000 Oregonians who applied, 13,680 did not receive aid from FEMA for their homes being destroyed. (cite: <https://www.opb.org/article/2021/02/11/oregon-2020-wildfires-fema-disaster-aid-denied/>) Again, this is resulting in more Oregonians becoming unhoused and struggling to get by. On top of the fact of people needing housing, they are going through the trauma of the pandemic and wildfires, trauma that has not bypassed the already unhoused communities in Oregon. In Eugene, we spent weeks with our air quality off the charts, nearly a week where our air quality was the worst in the world. Unhoused communities had to sleep in that, walk around in that, sit in that, try to eat and drink while it was raining ash around them. I watched unhoused community members be denied support from the Wildfire Relief resource center that was run at Silke Field in Springfield, as if they did not also suffer from this horrific situation. I present all of these situations, and anecdotes, as reminders that we are in unprecedented challenging times right now, and those affected the most are the unhoused, of which we have seen an influx, and are likely to continue to see an influx once the eviction moratorium expires. Our society in so many ways has set these folks up for failure, even going so far as to essentially dehumanize them by taking away their rights to access public lands, and live in public spaces. They have nowhere else. We MUST show our humanity and care for our vulnerable populations by doing all we can to make them less vulnerable to human injustice. Please support this bill, please protect Oregonians.