

Hello and thank you to the Committee for considering this bill. I supported a disabled homeless individual in my home for over a year in an effort to get him into a safe and stable situation. Several years of homelessness had resulted in this individual developing profound mental illness, as he was taken advantage of almost constantly, and in turn had to take advantage of others. His homelessness and resulting mental illness paradoxically resulted in him not being able to adequately take advantage of direct aid services, because none of them could be trusted, and he would simply start cursing and yelling when he felt he was being taken advantage of. As a blind man living on the street this was a successful adaptation to street living, but it has caused major problems as he tries to again react normally to others. Homelessness is a social disease that results from lack of love. In turn, the homeless community is one of the most brutal and inhumane communities to live in, especially for a disabled person, reflecting the lack of social values that have caused people to be houseless. Enforcing a "no rest" provision on city streets obviously rubs salt in the wounds these individuals experience, in which every day some kind of robbery, assault, power game or psychological manipulation is assured to happen and further reinforce the notion that the world is an unsafe place to meet one's basic needs. Obviously, homeless individuals need some place to call "home" and the wherewithal to meet all of their needs, and in which they can rest without fear of being robbed or assaulted in some way, and the longer this is delayed the more unhealthy they will become. To business owners who have pleaded with some kind of solution to the problem of crazy people sleeping on the sidewalk - simply remember that it is we who put them there, and through the force of our indifference and the force of an unsafe circumstance. Enough personal experience with individuals who have become homeless or escaped from it has proved to me that few, if any of you would not present with disabling mental illness after a few years dealing with this environment. Imagining yourselves completely without support, sleeping on the street and knowing with absolute certainty that sometime soon your shoes and all possessions will be stolen off you as you sleep, and then if you try to defend yourself you will be assaulted. If someone has a grudge, you will be assaulted anyway, or even murdered. Now, imagine that an officer is waking you up out of your slumber. I can't imagine a circumstance in which this would be helpful, not even the perverse circumstance in which a homeless person would rather be in jail than on these streets. For that reason I support this bill and a more robust conversation about what our real priorities are. It is not a matter of jobs and businesses vs helping. A robust provision here and elsewhere in the US for meeting the basic need for housing, regardless of income, will help, rather than harm local businesses, because of the amount of disposable income rent reductions or eliminations will liberate for local spending, plus the gradual elimination of the more superficial problem of unsightly downtown homelessness.