

Dear Chair Bynum,

I am submitting testimony in support of the Right To Rest Act. Passing this bill would be a humane step in the direction of progress towards a resolution of the homeless crisis. The state needs to flip the script and set an example that the poor and the houseless are not the enemy. Sooner or later we'll be looking back on our cruel treatment of these citizens as we do the cruel practices once used against mental illness. The turning point starts when we say it does and this is an opportunity that count be passed on.

I have been volunteering to support houseless communities in Portland since the pandemic began. As tough as some of these folks have it, you wouldn't know it once opening up the lines of communication with them. It only takes a couple visits and some easy conversation before you're greeting them exactly the way you would your neighbor next door. The only ugliness I've seen is from a) the city when they are perpetrating their sweeps or b) hateful and profane housed neighbors. The former is to blame for inventing this narrative and the latter is conditioned to perpetuate it. The answer is to help both sides at the same time. This starts with dignity and respect.

The clock is ticking and the book is being written. Act now and set an example or we will be left behind and all suffer for it.

Sincerely,

Peter Helmis