

Dear Judiciary Committee,

As a physician, I urge you to support HB2367, which will make Oregon law in accord with the UN Human Rights Committee, which states that criminalization of homelessness violates human rights treaty obligations. The US has not invested in affordable housing since 1996, so that homelessness has tripled in our major West Coast cities. Since criminalization of homeless people creates legal barriers, making it even harder for them to get ANY housing, nor the employment which would allow them to afford housing--the health consequences of this are many, particularly when food sharing in public is prohibited. All these laws make health worse in COVID times. I have worked at Wallace Medical Concern, and Health Help/Essential Health Clinics--I have seen how impossible it is for the homeless to overcome this criminal stigmatization. I look at Central City Concern in Portland--which invests in housing as well as all their other services, because they know these services--including clinics-- cannot be successful when a patient is homeless & a criminal record makes it impossible to find housing or work. Oregon cities have spent far too much on police who spend far too much time "policing" the homeless: instead we must invest these moneys in affordable housing. Homeless lives matter.

Thank you,
Dr. Virginia Feldman MD, FAAP