

Chair Bynum, Vice-Chairs Noble and Power, and Members of the Committee,

I would like to strongly urge you to support House Bill 2367. Now is definitely the time for Oregon to join the national trend condemning discriminatory practices which criminalize homeless people for existing in public.

In my volunteer work with the Poor People's Campaign, the Church of the Madeleine, the Urban Missionaries, and Saint Andrew Catholic Church in Portland, I have worked alongside and come to know many of our houseless neighbors in Portland. The problems they encounter in simply trying to survive are nearly unendurable. To add to that with a system that adds to their burden by criminalizing their very means of survival is unconscionable. It creates further legal, economic, and mental roadblocks and entrenches poverty indefinitely. As noted by the ACLU, "Even minor crimes can lead to serious consequences, including the loss of a job or the denial of employment, housing, government benefits, and treatment and services" (ACLU Oregon, "Why the Right to Rest is the High Road for Oregon," pg. 19).

Like many of the housed people of Oregon, I see their situation as a societal failure and know that is the responsibility of all Oregonians to work address this failure. Please take this first step toward a more just and fair society and vote to move this bill out of committee with a recommendation to pass.