

Good afternoon Representative Bynum and members of the committee,

My name is Anna Kemper. I live in NE Portland, on land that was stolen from the Cowlitz and Multnomah tribes. Today I'm here on behalf of Sunrise Movement PDX. We're a youth climate justice organization working to stop climate change and create a just and sustainable future in the process.

I'm here today to advocate on behalf of HB 2367, the Right to Rest Act. Researching this bill was eye-opening and heartbreaking. In Oregon, it is still legal to punish people for none other than the crime of being poor and being without proper shelter. People who are houseless are penalized for "crimes of survival" such as simply sitting and standing where they apparently shouldn't. To me, this is the definition of cruelty.

I was born and raised in Portland. I believe that most of my neighbors want a safe, sustainable future for themselves, their children, and their community. I believe my community wants to live in a world where we treat our neighbors with compassion and not punishment. So why is criminalizing poverty still legal?

Arresting or citing people who are houseless does nothing to solve the housing and homeless crisis. Instead it strips people of their liberty, their dignity, and brings more misery to people who are already struggling to survive. On top of that, when someone is booked for failing to pay a citation they can't afford, the criminal charges end up on their "record", making it exceedingly more difficult to eventually find safe and affordable housing. I'm struggling to understand how this effectively addresses poverty and houselessness, while it instead seems to exacerbate the problems.

In 2017, 50% of arrests made by the Portland Police Bureau were of houseless people- yes, that is 1 in 2. The cops, whose tools are tickets, arrests and force, do nothing to help the problems people who are houseless face. Our entire system is woefully inadequate at addressing the actual causes of these problems.

Oregon has a shameful history of targeted racism that has lasted until today. Black, Indigenous people and People of Color are unequally targeted by the police in this state, and so our BIPOC houseless neighbors are even more impacted by this criminalization of poverty.

The COVID-19 crisis has exposed the cracks in the systems that exist in our society which have led to skyrocketing rates of unemployment, houselessness and poverty. We're facing a climate crisis which will dramatically worsen these issues. Our houseless and unsheltered neighbors will (and already do) face the brunt of these problems.

Our neighbors living on the streets have profoundly tragic, human stories of loss and survival. I believe in a Portland that responds to the housing crisis with compassion and care for our neighbors. I believe in legislators who have the political courage to take bold, radical legislative action.

I'm respectfully urging members of this committee to take this bold step to protect our houseless neighbors and restore their most basic human rights. Thank you for your time this afternoon. The members of Sunrise PDX eagerly await your decision.