



Senate Committee on Judiciary
Re: Support for HB 3115

5/3/2021

Chair Prozanski and committee members, I appreciate the opportunity to support HB 3115. I'm Mari Anne Gest representing Church at the Park (C@P) which is a non-profit organization serving unsheltered individuals and families since 2007 in the Salem area.

C@P seeks the mutual transformation of unsheltered people, our staff, and our volunteers through relationships, agency partnerships, and tangible resources. The 20/20 Point in Time Count for Oregon indicated that 61 percent of people experiencing homelessness are unsheltered in places not meant for human habitation. Additionally, the Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance conducted a Service Gap Analysis in July of 2020 publishing that, "culturally-specific and low-barrier shelters were identified to be most urgent, specifically for women, youth, families, and non-sobriety required eligibility."

Recognizing the dire need for safe shelter options, C@P has expanded services to include outreach, navigation, and low-barrier shelter options of all types. We are located directly adjacent to Salem's Gateway park, where many unhoused individuals are camping. C@P was recently awarded funding to expand the day center for services to 20 hours a week, serving meals, providing laundry services, showers, mail service, and case management. In addition, we manage several shelters for the homeless and work with them to secure a better future.

C@P supports HB 3115 which requires local laws regulating the acts of sitting, lying, sleeping, or keeping warm and dry in outdoor public spaces be objectively reasonable as to time, place, and manner with regards to persons experiencing homelessness. I have spent considerable time with many homeless individuals and contrary to some perceptions, the homeless are often people down on their luck and is not a choice. Our area has been hit with fires, a down economy and Covid-19 which has adversely affected people living on the edge – paycheck to paycheck. These are our neighbors, relatives and acquaintances. Many end up on the street. C@P is working to get them into temporary shelters in the short-term but there are just not enough shelters to accommodate the growing need. HB 3115 applies reasonable standards to sit, lie or camping bans and will assist in lessening the impact on our public safety resources.

We share the concerns of our neighbors and businesses that often find themselves surrounded by garbage and unsheltered individuals, but these are human beings that need help. C@P is

dedicated to assist them in finding solutions and in cleaning up the camps and sidewalks. We sponsor a program called "Cash for Trash" where individuals are awarded gift cards to a local establishment for cleaning up trash. We hope to expand on that project as well as secure a truck for garbage disposal, paying the unsheltered for cleaning up camps with credit to purchase sleeping bags, tents and clothing.

Thank you for your consideration and support of HB 3115.

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