

Submitter: Michael Goodman

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure: HB3501

I am writing to express my deep concern about the current homeless crisis in our city and the proposed policy to legalize camping in public spaces. While I understand the complexity of this issue and the need for compassionate solutions, I am troubled by several aspects that need to be addressed. I am vehemently opposed to this proposed policy. Why I need to write you about this strikes me as crazy. It is highly tone-deaf and troubles me as to the direction of our state that we are even considering something like this!

One issue is the proliferation of non-profit organizations thriving off this crisis. While I support charitable efforts, I question the effectiveness and accountability of the numerous non-profits operating in this space. With so many organizations with their hands out, monitoring the results and ensuring cost-effectiveness takes a lot of work. The focus should be on achieving tangible results and finding long-term solutions rather than perpetuating the crisis for personal gain.

Moreover, the inconsistency in regulations is baffling. As a property owner, I must obtain permits for minor structures in my backyard, even though I am already paying exorbitant property taxes. Yet, it seems permissible for individuals to set up tents or makeshift shelters on sidewalks, sometimes right in front of private properties. This inconsistency is frustrating and undermines the integrity of the regulatory system.

Furthermore, the proposed policy to legalize camping in public spaces is tone-deaf and shortsighted. I love our city and believe that even during the pandemic, things were not as dire as some portray. However, I fear this policy will only exacerbate revitalizing Portland and will not attract more investment. I have seen examples from other cities, such as Austin, Texas, where a similar policy resulted in tents multiplying overnight and public spaces turning into mini-tent cities. This is not the outcome we want for our beloved city.

I also cannot help but notice that people experiencing homelessness seem to have more rights than the average citizen. While I empathize with their plight, it is disheartening to see how some individuals experiencing homelessness can engage in illegal or harmful behavior without consequences. At the same time, ordinary citizens are left vulnerable and unable to protect their property or seek legal recourse. The current system seems to target the middle class disproportionately, which is a concerning trend that must be addressed.

Moreover, the fact that the proposed policy has gained national attention, with

negative coverage in various media outlets, is troubling. As someone who loves and defends our city, it is disheartening to see such a policy being discussed within our government. This kind of attention breeds fear and uncertainty, dissuading potential investors, tourists, and businesses from coming to Portland. It is not the image we want to project and does not align with our values as a progressive and compassionate city.

As a self-proclaimed liberal, it pains me to oppose this policy, but I believe it goes against common sense and may worsen the homeless crisis in our city. I urge you to reconsider this proposal and explore more effective and comprehensive solutions that prioritize the well-being of all residents, including those experiencing homelessness, without compromising the safety and livability of our city.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,
Michael Goodman