

Submitter: Michael Smith

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure: HB3501

While I am very sympathetic to the plight of the homeless, I think this bill is remarkably short-sighted, and poorly thought out. Our city, Portland, has been overwhelmed by our "crisis of the commons," where the city really has stopped working for almost everyone in the city... whether housed, or houseless... wealthy, or indigent... tax-paying, or not, etc... Many public areas have deteriorated to a point where they aren't really effective public areas any more. I think the state needs to be more clear-eyed and practical and balanced about addressing our collective challenges, otherwise we risk further loss of population, livability, economic viability etc... for Portland, Multnomah County, and really all of Oregon. I think we must balance real compassion for our least fortunate and most vulnerable, with clear-eyed acceptance of the needs and costs to the entire community and society... and seek to find a balance point that can lead to the compromises (yes, compromises) that lead to the best solutions for as many and as broad of a swath of Oregonians as possible... understanding and accepting that these compromises probably won't be seen as ideal by certain segments who express the most extreme views on each side. I believe we are far past that balance point in terms of our policies towards the homeless, and have veered (out of genuine good will) to a societal permissiveness for asocial (and sometimes frankly antisocial) behavior that has alienated many longtime residents. I think this has actually paradoxically decreased the compassion that many Oregonians feel towards our fellow citizens with greatest needs... since it is hard to be as compassionate about others when you see such a practical blows to your own livelihoods, to your family's safety, to integrity of your property, to ability to enjoy public areas (or public services), etc... to the point that many are reluctantly but increasingly contemplating leaving the city and the state. I see and hear in many of my fellow Portlanders and Oregonians an increasing callousness towards the plight of the homeless, a stance that "anything and everything" that could fix the problem should be pursued... and I think that is extremely unfortunate and misguided... a reflection of our impractical, polarizing policies. So let's find actual practical compromises that make sense. This bill is anything but such in my eyes.

Respectfully, Michael Smith