

Submitter: Lars Hedbor

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure: HB3501

The root cause of homelessness is a lack of housing. This seems like a basic point, but it bears repeating under a legal environment that has been focused for decades on inhibiting the development of new housing. To address that underlying cause, we must fundamentally reassess our opposition to urban growth. A sharp increase in the supply of housing will inevitably drive down prices and provide relief to the problem of homelessness, and it would be a compounding of past mistakes to add requirements around affordability or other attempts to interfere with natural market forces.

Applying a band-aid that weakens property rights and encourages the sort of substandard, insecure temporary shelter that blights our landscape will only exacerbate the danger to the unhoused and the resentment of the communities that wind up as unwilling hosts to their hovels. Third-world style shanty towns should never be the goal of public policy in communities with the resources available in a place like Oregon.

Obviously, the problem of homelessness is complex and multifaceted -- there are elements of mental health care, addiction recovery, domestic abuse, and poverty, in addition to the root problem of housing supply -- and Oregonians would be better served by policies that address those issues than by this bill, which will only make our current temporary crisis a permanent part of our landscape.