

Submitter: Megan Sharp

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure: HB3501

I'm writing to voice my opposition to HB3501. As someone who lives in the greater Portland Metro, and frequently commutes into Portland proper for recreation and work, the effects of homelessness on our community are something I see everyday. HB 3501 sends a message that we are condoning the use of our public spaces for human habitation. The provisions included prioritize the rights of campers over tax-paying community members. As citizens are calling for real results, this measure comes across as a total failure to read the room.

I recognize that every houseless person's circumstances are unique; this is a multi-faceted problem that requires a multilayered solution. However, my concern is that due to the vague definition of what rightly constitutes "harassment" against a houseless individual, homeowners and businesses will have to fight an uphill battle in trying to guarantee a safe and accessible public right of way for their community. It's well-known that camps often pose a health, safety, and fire hazard to the surrounding neighborhood. This is not to even mention the morale hit that we all take by seeing open drug use and people living in squalor. Sometimes sweeps are a necessary evil, and this bill makes that harder. I can also envision this measure inhibiting efforts to transition homeless people into housing once it is made available.

We already have Martin vs. Boise in place to provide protection for campers as we navigate this crisis. We cannot swing the needle further towards condoning the current state of things. We must create pressure for real solutions to happen. Campers must transition to treatment or housing, even involuntarily if absolutely necessary. I strongly urge lawmakers to scrap this measure and turn their attention towards a real solution - one that will both provide ample opportunities for affordable housing and push those into rehabilitation that require it.