

Submitter: Bessie Johnson
On Behalf Of: Myself
Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness
Measure: HB3501

April 30, 20323

House Committee On Housing and Homelessness
Right to Rest HB 3501

Representatives

My name is Bessie Johnson. I was an Albany City Councilor for 20 years (2002-2021). During that time, I saw the homeless issue continue to escalate. This issue continued to tax our understaffed police department and has only gotten worse over time. Cities do their best to deal with the homeless, but they are also charged with keeping the public safe. Many of our citizens do not feel safe using our parks and walkways due to the threat of being hassled or even worse, being accosted or injured. Citizens have told me repeatedly that they feel the homeless have more rights than they do. One couple had some homeless set up camp right behind their property and were harassed any time they wanted to use their back yard. They said "we pay taxes for protection but nothing was done for a long time". Finally, the camp was cleared. This isn't right.

HB 3105 is a very bad idea. Enabling the homeless creates a never-ending problem. We all know that drugs and mental health issues are the base of the problem. To give them more rights would make the problem worse. They have to be made accountable just like the rest of us. I refer to Measure 110 which decriminalized many uses of drugs. That definitely is not working. My husband and I have too much personal experience with drug use. Our daughter has been an addict for years. One thing we learned is that if you give them more rights and leeway, they will take total advantage of it and not get better. Why would you want to change if you're fed, get health care and know that you're not in danger of getting arrested or have any consequences. Plus, the homeless grapevine is widespread. As soon as the word gets out if this passes, they will come. WE DO NOT DESERVE THIS. And neither do they.

I respectfully request that you do not pass this.

Bessie Johnson
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