

Honorable members of the Oregon Senate Judiciary committee, I am writing to oppose SB 243, specifically, the 243-1 amendment.

I am disappointed to see that this committee copied its House counterpart and posted a 23-page amendment to this bill just over 24 hours before the public hearing, allowing little time for public comment and analysis. If this bill is such a great idea, then surely it can withstand a few weeks of public scrutiny.

However, SB 243-1 isn't a great idea, it's a rotten one. None of the proposals in this bill will prevent crime or help law enforcement catch criminals. Instead, this bill creates several non-violent possessory offences. It is unwise to dedicate law enforcement resources to prosecuting non-violent possession charges when Oregon's courts are already overwhelmed with more serious cases. As an example of the strain that our judicial system is under, OPB published a March 13th article detailing that,

At the end of January, there were 4,178 individuals who didn't have an attorney statewide. The highest number of individuals in this situation are in Multnomah (1,172), Marion (756), Jackson (754), Washington (628), Douglas (253) and Coos counties (99). The numbers are constantly fluctuating, but the end-of-January numbers were an all-time high.

There were about 730 people who had been without representation for more than six months. Most of the people waiting for counsel are not currently in jail. But, at the end of January, there were 191 people in custody who didn't have an attorney.

The majority of cases are misdemeanors...

<https://www.opb.org/article/2025/03/13/oregon-counsel-unrepresented-attorneys-crisis-misdemeanors-felony-cases/>

SB 243-1 creates more misdemeanors and will make the "unrepresented crisis" worse.

Please vote no on SB 243-1.

Earl Hixson, Ph.D.

Portland, OR