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TO: Senate Committee On Commerce and General Government
SUBJECT: Oppose SB 1514: Oregon Needs A Humane, Effective Approach to Homelessness

Dear Chair Meek, Vice Chair Drazan, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kathleen Mahoney and I live in Portland, Oregon. I am testifying in opposition to SB 1514 because I have worked alongside Oregonians who experience homelessness and poverty. And I care about what happens to our most vulnerable neighbors.

All of us need a roof over our heads, but too many Oregonians are struggling to afford housing. The reasons are clear: rising costs, not enough shelters, not enough housing, and wages that haven't kept up with rent. The necessities that we all need are out of reach for some and that is not a personal failure, it is a policy one.

In my line of work, I have witnessed people

- **Face Impossible Barriers:** People finally find a living space only to be told a minor procedural error or an inflexible policy prevents them from moving in.
- **Endure Constant Fear:** I have worked with individuals who lose sleep night after night, terrified of being assaulted or having their few remaining possessions taken in a sweep.
- **Lose Their Dignity:** Too often, our neighbors are treated as problems to be cleared away rather than human beings in need of a roof.

Our current law, ORS 195.530, is working. It allows cities to make reasonable rules around camping while providing basic protections. Hundreds of Oregon cities have built their local ordinances on this framework, which was developed with input from stakeholders.

Without the current law, every city and county will be sent back to the drawing board. Cities and counties will have no guidance on how to regulate public spaces. It will cause uncertainty and do nothing to actually help people find housing.

If the law is repealed, it will also pave the way for harsh local rules that make things worse. It will increase the risk of fines, tickets, and jail time for people experiencing homelessness who have no other place to go. Fines and jail time don't solve homelessness. A 2024 study of 100 major U.S. cities found that punitive approaches did not decrease homelessness.

ORS 195.530 allows cities to maintain reasonable rules while protecting basic human dignity. We should be focusing our energy on building housing and expanding services, not dismantling the protections that prevent this crisis from becoming even more inhumane.

I urge you to **vote NO on SB 1514**. Thank you for your time and your service to our state.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kathleen Mahoney".

Kathleen Mahoney