

Submitter: Sandra Comstock
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Commerce and General Government
Measure, Appointment or SB1514
Topic:

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 Dr Sandra Comstock - I live in portland oregon I am testifying in opposition to SB 1514 because:

I am the executive director of Hygiene4All in portland oregon - last year our mostly homeless staff provided over 5000 unsheltered patrons with showers, a place to use the bathroom, hygiene and 1st aid supplies , clothing and bedding and medical referrals - all underneath the morisson bridge using a generator and trucked in water 4 afternoons and evenings a week.

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.

My organization, Hygiene4All exists not only to provide the basic dignity and health and wellbeing essentials to the most vulnerable victims of our affordability crisis - we are a conduit connecting our unsheltered community members to channels for communicating their experiences and sharing the systemic changes and investments they need to thrive.

Every time one of our patron comes in to get a shower or care for wounds or replace clothing and bedding lost in sweeps and displacement we ask them - when was the last time you were swept by the city. In 2024 46% of respondents reported they had been swept in the previous 2 weeks; in 2025 the percentage of our patrons displaced and dispossessed of critical survival belongings rose to 67% ... In short almost 7 in ten unsheltered residents are currently having to move to a new area of the city and losing ids, medications and clothing every 2 weeks - and now on top of that they face fines and court appearance orders even with the current protections under state law . the effects are egregious - one woman we successfully helped begin treatment for hepatitis had to restart treatment 6 times over 6 months due to loss of medications until we began holding onto the meds for her and providing her 2 doses each visit. hepatitis does not stop at the threshold of homes - more hepatitis among our unsheltered neighbors increases infection across the whole population - housed and unhoused .

moreover - in the first 2 months of portland enforcing its camping ban - police officers

have been diverted from their core work to warrant check and issue citations at an average of 60 sweeps a month - according to officers i spoke with at a police oversight meeting the PPD sends 6-8 officers on any specific sweep - meaning this is diverting 960 hours of police time a month that only increases the debt and interactions with courts of those already over represented in arrests - largely for unpaid fines and court no shows largely for "crimes" of survival . in 2018 alone 52% of arrests in our county were of people without an address - who at that time made up 2 % of the population . and yet housed residents were far more likely to be charged with a violent crime. in short criminalizing and excluding our most vulnerable via laws that fail to take into account for instance that there are now 7000 unsheltered in multnomah county and less than 1/2 that number of beds . policing and shelters without pathways to housing have increased dramatically in 2025 in portland and yet we have an additional 2000 more now living unsheltered on our streets than a year ago. we cannot police our way out of homelessness.

Eviction prevention and rent assistance with case management yield - by far - the highest return on public investment; they are the most effective and cost efficient interventions to keep and get our Beloved Community off the streets and are the only way to lower homelessness (rapidly rising and wasteful) city expenditures on sweeps, camping ban enforcement, overnight only shelters

thanks. sandra comstock