

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

My name is Alison Ellsworth. I am a resident and educator in Portland, OR, and I am writing in strong opposition to SB1514.

SB 1514 would repeal Oregon's statewide "objective reasonableness" standard that currently governs how local governments regulate the use of public property by people experiencing homelessness. This standard exists to ensure that restrictions are fair, balanced, and grounded in reality especially when people have nowhere else to go and day shelters are not enough.

Repealing this protection would make it easier for local jurisdictions to enact broad or punitive restrictions without guaranteeing shelter or housing alternatives. That approach does not solve homelessness. It increases instability.

From my experience, enforcement-first policies dehumanize people in the community who are struggling. These people are my friends, colleagues, and community members. They live in my neighborhood and the neighborhoods where I work, volunteer, and spend my free time. Criminalizing factors beyond their control without providing the support they need to create the lives that they want and deserve.

Thinking about the impact of these potential restrictions breaks my heart. My friends and community members will lose what little they have and be forced further into the margins of our society.

In addition, enforcement-first policies:

- Displace people without creating housing
- Create legal and financial barriers that make it harder for people to secure housing
- Increase strain on emergency systems and service providers
- Shift public resources toward enforcement rather than homeless prevention and housing

Oregon's homelessness crisis is rooted in structural issues: a shortage of deeply affordable housing, rising rents, stagnant wages, and gaps in behavioral health services. SB 1514 does not address these root causes.

It is also important to acknowledge that homelessness in Oregon is not race-neutral. Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color are disproportionately impacted due to historic and ongoing systemic inequities. Policies that expand enforcement authority risk deepening those inequities.

Real community safety comes from stability. It comes from investing in eviction prevention, rental assistance, behavioral health services, and culturally responsive supports which are all actual housing-first strategies. We cannot enforce our way out of a housing crisis.

I urge you to reject SB 1514 and instead prioritize solutions that affirm dignity, promote equity, and create lasting pathways to housing stability.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
Alison Ellsworth, Portland