

Submitter: Kathryn Kirstein

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Commerce and General Government

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1514

My name is Kathryn Kirstein. I am a veterinarian and have lived in Portland, OR since 2002. Like most Oregonians, I have watched in horror as the homeless crisis has exponentially worsened on our city and region. I have been blessed to have the physical, mental, and financial security to remain housed for my entire life, but many in our city have not. As affordable housing, mental health, and drug addiction resources have dwindled on both a state and national level, especially for our BIOPOC and Indigenous communities, more of our neighbors have experienced housing insecurity and homelessness.

Beginning almost 4 years ago I began to provide assistance and aid to the homeless in my community. The vast majority of the people I meet are homeless due to loss of affordable housing, a medical crisis that bankrupted them, or escaping abusive homes. Most are from Portland or the region, and most have sought resources from the city only to receive no follow up or extended waits for care.

In the mean time they are suffering constant sweeps from Rapid Response (funded by the city), destruction of the little property they own, and a decrease in supplies and services that were previously available. Access to a stable, sheltered place to sleep, even in a tent, without being moved every 1-3 days affords them a the ability to rest, seek resources, and receive support from mutual aid groups who are picking up the slack the city is not providing.

It has grown from bad to worse since the Mayor Wilson and the new city council have been in power. I implore you to reject SB 1514 to prevent an even greater crisis and deterioration of the physical and mental health of our homeless neighbors. Instead, please work to provide safe, affordable housing and supportive resources for our most vulnerable neighbors. Housing first has been shown over and over again to be the most effective catalyst for change.

Thank you,
Kathryn Kirstein