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**Senate Committee on Commerce and General Government
Testimony in Opposition to SB 1514
February 13th, 2026**

Re: Opposition to SB 1514 - No to rolling back reasonableness standards

Chair Meek, Vice-Chair Drazan, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center, thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to SB 1514, which would repeal the current state law requiring that local ordinances regulating camping must be reasonable.

Our client community includes the more than 22,000 people in Oregon struggling with homelessness and the tens of thousands more who are living on extremely low or fixed incomes and are rent burdened in their housing. The challenge to find and maintain safe, stable, affordable housing is one of the most important issues in our clients' lives. All of us need a roof over our heads, but powerful forces like economic hardship, wage inequality and discrimination force many vulnerable neighbors to live outside.

The striking thing about the public debate on homelessness is how much we all agree. Regardless of political party, geographic community or economic background: we all believe that homelessness is tragic. It harms people forced to survive without shelter and it harms our neighborhoods, businesses and cities. We all agree: no seniors, no children, no one in a wheelchair – no one – should have to sleep outside.

And yet, the vast majority of Oregon's population experiencing homelessness *does* have to sleep outside. Oregon has available shelter beds for only 43 percent of the people who are homeless. This leaves the most vulnerable populations literally with no choice but to sleep outside. This past year, the fastest growing category of people experiencing homelessness was families with children. The year before that, it was seniors experiencing homelessness for the first time. Oregon has the most homeless children in the country, and high rates of homelessness among veterans, survivors of domestic violence fleeing abuse, and people with disabilities.

We talk to clients all the time who are lifelong residents of their communities and, facing homelessness, are treated like outsiders. Some stay in constant motion, because resting is considered a crime. Some, whose disabilities are made worse by walking or carrying their stuff, shelter deeper into outlying areas, away from services and the safety of their community. Some face relentless harassment from law enforcement with compounding citations or often hostile orders to "find a different place to go." Some have fled domestic violence, making the impossible choice between leaving an abusive situation and maintaining stable housing. Each client has a different story, but they share common challenges caused by systemic failures.



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Fines and Jail Time Don't Work

We know the reasons we see people living outside. There are not enough accessible shelters, there is not enough housing, wages have not kept pace with rising rents, and our safety nets like rent assistance, mental health care, and eviction protection have been underfunded for decades. Last session, this legislature slashed funding for effective and proven prevention and support solutions, and predictably, homelessness rates rose. Eviction filings are at a record high, with almost 3,000 filings last month alone. Close to 90% of these filings are due to the affordability crisis, and will place more people in jeopardy of homelessness.

We know how to solve homelessness for our communities. Proven solutions like building more affordable housing, ensuring access to support services, sufficient and accessible shelters, transitional housing options, rent assistance and eviction prevention - these are all effective strategies to decrease homelessness and increase success for our communities.

By contrast, punitive approaches like sweeps, tickets, fines and arrests are cruel, costly, ineffective and play no role in a thoughtful and reasonable plan to end homelessness. A 2024 study of local ordinances in 100 major U.S. cities found that punitive approaches to camping yielded no measurable decrease in homelessness in those communities.

Stripping Away Minimum Protections Would Be Harmful and Ineffective

The current law works. ORS 195.530 allows cities and counties to make and enforce reasonable rules around camping, and explicitly preserves local control by calling out that local circumstances be taken into account when creating ordinances. The only limitation imposed by the statute is that local ordinances must be objectively reasonable given local circumstances. This is an appropriate and bare minimum role for state government to play, in assuring that ordinances that can subject Oregonians to fines, fees and other sanctions for violation must be reasonable.

Cities could face greater legal liability and unnecessary legal battles

Hundreds of cities across Oregon have structured clear and enforceable camping ordinances that rely on the current statutory framework. Our state law was designed and championed by cities and advocates together and it passed with bipartisan support. Cities and counties of varying sizes and from across the state supported passage of the bill in part because the statutory guidelines created a kind of safe harbor from legal liability so long as the jurisdiction's regulations complied with the reasonableness standard. Other claims, such as disability-focused or constitutionally-protected rights, could apply to the same public space management issues, but ORS 195.530 provides a helpful roadmap for cities and counties to comply with all. Repealing it now would send local governments back to the drawing board and expose localities to unnecessary legal battles.



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The US Supreme Court ruling in *City of Grants Pass v. Johnson* explicitly supports laws just like Oregon's.

The *Martin v. Boise* case was a 9th Circuit case which held that no one who is sleeping outside should be punished for survival activities when they have no place else to go. HB 3115 (2021) was written with that current federal case law landscape in mind, but was intended only to capture the spirit of those holdings and not as a verbatim codification of them. HB 3115 set a policy course for Oregon that should outlive the subsequent evolution of that case law. In fact, when the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Martin v. Boise* in 2024, the opinion directly referenced ORS 195.530 as an example of state laws that could coexist with case law. Contrary to what some proponents are claiming here, the Supreme Court actually expected Oregon's law to coexist with its ruling.

In addition, while ruling held that the 8th Amendment's prohibition on Cruel and Unusual Punishment did not apply, the Justices specifically noted - in both the ruling and the dissent - that other constitutional challenges—specifically under the Due Process Clause and the Eighth Amendment's Excessive Fines Clause—remain viable.

In closing:

Oregonians are not unhoused by choice; they are unhoused because rent is unaffordable, wages are lagging, and housing supply is insufficient. Removing protections to make survival behaviors—sleeping, resting, keeping belongings—into crimes only sends more people to our backlogged courts, and further from stable housing.

As it stands, the law permits cities to develop reasonable regulations around public space, while prioritizing humane, proven solutions to homelessness. Legislators should be laser-focused on fixing broken systems, not lowering the bar for punishment. Repeal of ORS 195.530 would not create a single new shelter bed or affordable unit, nor will it open access to services to a single person.

It is the wrong approach and will set us back. We urge you to oppose. Thank you for your consideration.