

Submitter: Katharine Riojas

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure: HB3501

I am a mother of an 8 month old daughter and have lived in the same apartment in St. John's for 10 years. I have watched the community crumble around me. Today, on my walk to Ace Hardware, I had to call 911 because a mother was having a mental crisis in the middle of the road with her unconscious child in the stroller in front of her. I've seen her before. She lives in "The Cut" which is a camp near Freddy's. As people tried to help her she screamed the most guttural and traumatizing sound I have ever heard come out of someone. "Get away from me, get away from me," over and over, and then just unintelligible screaming at the very top of her lungs. Her infant daughter's head flopped around as she darted from the sidewalk to the street. I could not tell if the child was alive, but she was not responsive to what was going on.

This is a normal day for me in St. John's. This is the community I am raising my daughter in. I have been chased into my house by a man who dropped needles along the way as I had my infant daughter in my arms not more than two months ago. This is not humane. Letting people live in camps and get to this point of absolute misery is not humane. Nothing about this is working and I know DAMN WELL that making it easier for people to camp is the absolute wrong direction to go.

When I called 911, I was on hold for 5 min before someone answered. As I explained what was going on, I was in tears. I do not know if the police found her, or the child. I most likely never will.

I'm tired. I'm sad and I'm exhausted from constantly having to protect myself. Please help us. Our city is dying.

-Katharine Riojas