

Submitter: Angela Hockabout

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure: HB3501

Dear Members of the Committee on Housing and Homelessness,

I want to thank you for taking the time to consider solutions to our extreme housing shortage and infrastructure crisis.

The problem of widespread homelessness is an infrastructure crisis. We already do not have enough room in hospitals, homes, mental health facilities, police stations or jails to deal with what's happening on our streets. I'm concerned that these laws will give the public and local governments one less tool to regulate illegal behavior. I'm worried that it might empower individuals to be more disruptive than they already are, or prevent people from intervening before a situation can become dangerous.

RV and tent fires are a problem in the winter and can cause widespread damage. What does this law do to differentiate the right to rest from public safety regulations? Are there ways to be more specific here?

I appreciate that we need to see our homeless neighbors as people and not objects. I understand that homeless people need a type of protected status. I understand that we are decades away from having the infrastructure to properly deal with this issue.

However, the law as its written now will only complicate situations when there needs to be intervention for the public's safety. It needs more specificity about the situations where movement would be acceptable.

For instance: homeless people wanting to rest in a library = Yes!

Homeless people just trying to hang out on a bus = Sure!

Homeless people getting access to safe injection sites = Please!

Homeless people turning tunnels under a bridge into a hovel, threatening public right of way? Not so much.

Homeless people tent camping in municipally sanctioned areas (including certain street medians, neighborhood where they're already camping) - under certain circumstances depending on how disruptive such encampments are to the neighborhood.

Requiring municipalities to provide trash services for homeless folks - Yes!

Laws require nuance and specificity. There's a lot of space between respecting the

circumstances of houseless people and protecting public safety.

I like that this law wants to ensure that people aren't discriminated against for being houseless. I like the idea that you have a right to exist. My concern is that this becomes a right to be irresponsible. There are consequences to one's choices in life. There is a balance between being compassionate/fair and enabling destructive behavior.

Sincerely,

Angela Hockabout