

Submitter: Lisa E

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure: HB3501

As an attorney, I don't even know where to begin in enumerating the problems with the bill proposed by representatives Chaichi and Pham. I will limit my testimony here to three major points: (1) It is unconstitutional in that it violates free speech. What constitutes "harassment?" If a physically disabled person asks a homeless person whose tent or belongings are chronically blocking the sidewalk to relocate so he or she can safely navigate the sidewalk, is that "harassment?" (2) The bill de facto grants control of public spaces to private citizens. I would ask how this is any different than the illegal occupation of the public Mahler National Wildlife Refuge by armed anti-government individuals several years ago. (3) On its face the bill would appear to hamstring efforts by the State of Oregon, as well as local municipalities, to maintain public safety and quality of life by removing homeless encampments and relocating inhabitants into shelters and other housing. It would also appear to prohibit efforts to connect individuals experiencing homelessness with vital services, as this could be perceived or experienced by those individuals as "harassment." In short, this bill does not offer solutions to the housing crises or the accompanying increase in crime that so many cities in Oregon have been experiencing over the past several years. Nor does it offer compassion to those forced to live on the streets--since when is turning a blind eye to people living outside in the elements, surrounded by garbage, and often in mental crisis, compassion?