

Submitter: Matthew Hughes
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness
Measure: HB3501

Dear Representative,

I am writing all of my representatives to say I strongly oppose House Bill 3501. Portland does not need more camping. We need more inpatient drug and mental health treatment and the means to compel people to receive it.

Portland has seen what unchecked camping does to our city. Garbage, open drug use, violence, and untreated mental illness have become our daily experience. I already feel uncomfortable on certain streets. My 10-year-old daughter feels uncomfortable walking alone to her after school activities and her friend's house, all less than a half mile from our NW Portland home. Vandalism and mentally ill people in crisis are literally killing downtown Portland's ecosystem of small businesses, and it will continue to get worse as leases come up for renewal. Much of our area's beautiful bicycle infrastructure has been rendered unusable. I see fires burning everywhere, including under critical infrastructure like bridges. Many mornings when I ride my bike to work downtown, I can smell burning plastic.

In the name social justice, we have created a system that allows people to barely survive while living in tents in our public spaces. We hand out food, sleeping bags, new tents, and more. What looks like charity and allows us to feel like we are being helpful actually enables people to continue to leave their addictions and mental illnesses unaddressed. It is unsanitary. It is dangerous. It is bad for 99.99% of the people who live here. It is inhumane.

Liberalism means having a government that is strong enough and efficient enough to care for the weakest and neediest in our society. What we have is not liberalism. What we have is "do whatever you want, wherever you want to do it," and our misplaced idealism is destroying our city.

I urge you to vote against this bill and bills of this nature.

I also urge you to consider reform of Measure 110 in order to give judges the tools to compel people to receive drug treatment.

Portland and Oregon are headed in the wrong direction.

Sincerely yours,
Matthew Hughes