

Right to Rest Testimony

I support the Right To Rest Act. Everyone should have the right to meet their basic needs regardless of their housing status. Sweeps are dangerous practices that criminalize poverty. I have read through the testimonies and I wanted to add some clarifying statements in regards to the very few arguments in opposition to this bill.

One argument blames unhoused people for the fact that they are denied trash services. Every person produces waste regardless of if the person lives in a house or is unsheltered. But, people who are constantly displaced don't have access to reliable trash services. It is clear that sweeps and other efforts to keep unhoused people in stable locations exacerbate this problem rather than solve it. I have heard and read stories about sweeps these stories include reports of people losing property. This happens when they are quickly forced to pick up and move, leaving many of their possessions behind. If people didn't have to be constantly on the move, they wouldn't be forced to abandon their property.

Helping people to stabilize in one place would make it much easier to establish hygiene access, trash services and other needed/wanted resources in these locations. Sweeps and all efforts to constantly relocate unhoused people exacerbate the very issues that the opponents of the bill complain about.

Also, some "testimony" shared by those who oppose this bill includes imagery of illegal dumping unrelated to the fact that some of our neighbors need to live outside. I don't believe that a person who cannot afford to live indoors bought and dumped several buckets of house-paint. Last time I checked, unhoused people don't have walls. A government body alleging that unhoused people are responsible for illegal dumping of what is obviously waste from a construction site is irresponsible and discriminatory.

Some opponents of this bill openly admit to having no relationship with any person who is unhoused. In their testimony, they express fears and repeat biases. They explicitly state that they seek to avoid association with unhoused people. These testimonies remind me of arguments I have read of people who wanted to maintain racial segregation through Jim Crow Laws. The state of Oregon should not support efforts of people who want to live in a segregated society. And no municipality should be allowed to run a compliant-driven system that gives power to these bigots. A person's rights are not determined by their wealth, income or access to capital. Poor people exist and they have a right to exist in public spaces.

I find it concerning that certain people openly advocate to treating people who are unhoused with "tough love" or promote sweeps as an effort to get people to "hit rock bottom" as if these were helpful or even socially acceptable perspectives to share publicly. These practices and approaches are cruel. I wonder if the people providing these testimonies have been made aware of House Concurrent Resolution 33 of 2017 that "Encourages state officers, agencies and employees to become informed regarding impacts of trauma and to implement evidence-based trauma-informed care practices and interventions."

I strongly support the Right to Rest Act. With the passage of this bill we will be able to reduce the amount of trauma that unhoused people are experiencing, promote hygiene access, and cultivate neighborly relationships. Once we stop criminalizing poor people we can more effectively work together to end the housing crisis by limiting the power of the oligarchs and by establishing & protecting economic rights for all Oregonians.