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Testimony in Support of HB 3115 9 March 2021

Chair Bynum, Vice-Chairs Noble and Power, and members of the committee:

I am writing to express Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's support for HB 3115, relating to homelessness and public space. HB 3115 addresses the burden of individuals experiencing houselessness who have no alternative to sitting, lying down, or sleeping in public spaces. We stand with other advocates in affirming that public safety includes the ability of those who experience houselessness to rest and exist in public spaces.

Working with over 150 congregations, organizations, and interfaith partners, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) strives to envision communities of faith in partnership creating a more peaceful, just, sustainable, and compassionate world. EMO works with and for Oregonians through direct service programming, dialogue, and advocacy. As leading advocates for Unaccompanied Houseless Youth (UHY), we unequivocally proclaim that individuals who experience homelessness must be affirmed and supported by their community, which includes the ability to rest, sit, or otherwise, outside, and in public spaces.

The 9th Circuit Court affirms; the *Martin v. City of Boise* ruling states that individuals experiencing homelessness cannot be punished for sleeping outside or in public places when there is a lack of adequate alternatives or unless the law imposes "reasonable time, place and manner" restrictions on the regulated activities in public space.¹

HB 3115 provides the opportunity and mandate for cities to comply with the 9th Circuit Court's ruling and helps to establish what reasonable ordinances refer to, requiring the perspective of all stakeholders to be considered, most significantly those experiencing houselessness. EMO rejects any mechanisms that allow the criminalization of houselessness and as such, affirms legislation such as HB 3115, which work to counteract historically discriminatory laws that target those experiencing houselessness.

As people of faith, we avow the inherent dignity of each individual person. We prioritize protection of safety and dignity for all people, including access basic human needs, such as rest and respite. As stated in our shared social principles: "Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon recognizes the important role of government in maintaining a system of laws, regulations and public services"², which includes the effective implementation and adherence of the court's ruling in *Martin v. City of Boise*.¹

We urge passage of HB 3115, and extend our gratitude to the individuals and organizations who helped craft the legislation. We thank you for your work and for your consideration of this essential legislation.

In partnership,

Olivia Asato
Public Policy Associate
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon

¹ *Martin v. City of Boise* <https://cdn.ca9.uscourts.gov/datasite/opinions/2018/09/04/15-35845.pdf>

² Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon Statement of Social Principles
https://emoregon.org/pdfs/Public_Policy/EMO_Statement_of_Social_Principles_rev2012.pdf