

Submitter: Virginia Farkas

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure: HB3501

Dear Legislator Chaichi and the House Committee on Housing and Homelessness,

HB 3501 is NOT the solution to helping the problem we have in our state. When the pandemic began our community, Eugene, allowed those without homes to set up tent cities in parks and other public locations. We ended up spending over \$300,000 to clean up the park under the Washington/Jefferson street bridge as it was contaminated and hazardous after that camp closed. That park is still not open. There was rampant crime in the area and nearby businesses suffered and several closed during this time.

It is not humane to allow individuals to set up tents anywhere they like with no sanitary facilities. It also is not fair to citizens whose children can't play in the parks for fear of finding needles or poop in the grass. Citizens are fearful to ride their bikes along some of our bike paths because they are harassed by homeless that are likely using drugs or are mentally ill. Tents set up on the parking strips or sides of the freeway are not safe places for people to sleep. Our riparian zones along the river have been contaminated with feces and garbage that gets washed into the river when the river rises with spring run-off. Volunteer groups like Riverkeepers cleans an area up, but then finds campers return and they have to do it again.

I am completely in support of the small home villages, safe sleep spots, day shelter centers, food pantries and dining rooms etc. that our community is supporting. These areas provide an opportunity for homeless to have a shower, store their belongings, and work together with others in the community to hopefully help them recover or stabilize from the challenges they are facing. I care about these individuals, but they need help navigating their mental illness, drug addition or other challenges and should not be given free reign to camp anywhere.

Our homeless are part of our community and we need to have empathy and help when we can. We need more drug treatment options and help for the mentally unstable. But we do not need to ignore rampant drug abuse, trash piling up around camping areas, and urine and feces in doorways of neighboring businesses. I know a business owner that was threatened ("I could kill you") when the person was asked not to camp on the side of his business.

Let's not pass bills that only make the problem worse. Let's continue to find out what can work and fund those efforts instead of cleaning up our mistakes. Right to rest is

not a right to behaviors that are unhealthy and unsafe.