

March 23

HB 3115 would make it legal to sit or lie and provides additional rights for the homeless population to sue local government for being moved without reasonable cause. Without many qualifying conditions, this bill only guarantees that there will be increasing friction between impacted residents and businesses and their homeless neighbors and fails to address any of the underlying problems of unemployment, mental health, addiction, criminal behavior, and the shortage of sanctioned and managed housing for those who are struggling to get back on their feet.

To continue to tolerate ad hoc camping in our public spaces or private lots including parks, streets and sidewalks, and natural areas and to encourage proposed HB **HB 3115** not only fails to solve a problem but creates significant new ones. Not the least of these is our states growing reputation not as a compassionate place but as an irresponsibly mismanaged state. The erosion of our streets, highways, parks and natural areas with sewage and trash and the abandonment of these spaces by community members, including children will only further erode trust.

Unfortunately, experience demonstrates that without on-site management by an accountable agency, homeless camps are not benign places –“temporary” or otherwise. The idea that widely distributed camping will improve the situation for the homeless is unfounded.

Questions I would hope you are asking:

Why are we providing additional rights to persons who occupy space not lawfully sanctioned.

What are you doing to mitigate the problems that lead to homelessness?

Why remove the only tool enabling local and state government to regulate homeless camping?

Who specifically is benefitting from guaranteeing sit lie entitlements?

Who is deprived of use of the space occupied (is a vacant church lot unable to be developed or a neighborhood park made too risky for children to play unsupervised)?

Who is paying the bills and who is not (are the costs born by emergency federal funds, state taxes, or by property taxes paid by renters and homeowners including the cleanup and trash removal?)

Your opposition to this irresponsible bill in its present form is appreciated.