

Submitter: Ellen Field

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure: HB3501

Persons experiencing houselessness currently have the same rights as any other person as far as land use. Those rights include using, but not living on or destroying public land. No one housed or unhoused should be allowed to live permanently or temporarily on public land. No person, housed or unhoused should be allowed to set up a dwelling, tent or otherwise on public land. No person should be allowed to use drugs or sell drugs on public land, defecated or urinate on public land or destroy public land. Currently no matter your housed or unhoused status you may pray, eat, meditate on public land. However you may not do that indefinitely and you may not claim that land as yours.

You needn't look any further than Multnomah County to see the incredibly damaging effect that bill like this can cause. This will not help the houseless community. This will not protect them. It will not assist them in seeking shelter, treatment for drug addiction or mental health or assist them in getting a job. This will only continue the problem we currently have and it will force the entire state to put energy and resources into cleaning, maintaining, and refurbishing these sites after they've been used as resting places. Public spaces are not campgrounds. They do not have restrooms or water facilities. They are not meant to be lived on. People will not be safe there and they will not prosper.

I urge you to consider what bills and policies like this have already done to Oregon Counties. Steel yourself to potentially be unpopular and seen as unprogressive but understand that we are very close to a point of no return. If we don't take action to fix the damage we've already done and do the right thing soon there may be no going back.