

Submitter: Patrick Lechner

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure: HB3501

First let me start by stating that as I am typing this testimony, there were 22 testimonies submitted to approve this bill, 1404 opposing this bill and 38 that are neutral. The will and the voice of the people is speaking very loudly and very clearly that they do not want this to pass. The people who voted each of you into office are saying that they do not agree with HB3501 and if you go forward with it you are ignoring what the people are trying to say to you. Next, I would like to point out that as this bill is currently written, there are too many gaps to be able to properly address the needs of the Oregon communities.

First, I would like to address the environmental factors. How does this bill address the environmental impacts of what the campers are doing to the land? I am located in the North Portland area where many of the campsites are on or next to hills. Digging out hillsides to allow for a flat area to pitch a tent creates and removal of vegetation creates erosion concerns. Vehicles that are not up to DEQ standards leak fluids harming plants and wildlife and in some areas potentially affecting ground water. A 50 foot tree is not going to die overnight, but it will begin to weaken and topple during a storm it normally would have survived.

Next, is the question on what to do with those making a home next to schools and parks. Last year there was a camper with a boat parked next to Holy Cross school with a very aggressive dog that would bark at anyone walking by. This scared children and families walking to and from the school as well as children while at outside at school. This situation took more than two weeks to resolve. Then there were the two trailers who parked right next to the playground at Portsmouth Park. Their possessions spilled over half of the sidewalk impeding people from walking or riding by. Is it expected that citizens can call the non-emergency line to have someone to come out and ask them to please move their stuff back? And what about the additional trash that they will create? Where is that being disposed of and who is expected to foot the bill for their trash services? A person should not feel intimidated or scared in their own home and neighborhood because of someone who is deciding to create a new living situation on a public piece of land.

Fining a municipality does not solve the problem or even start to solve the problem. This would be a solution if everyone that is currently homeless was that way due to no fault of their own and was trying to better their situation. Unfortunately many are now in that situation by their own choice and a law like this needs to help those who are looking for help while not rewarding or protecting those looking to take advantage of the system.