

Dear House Committee,

I am writing as a resident of the city of Portland in favor of the Right to Rest Act. As studies from the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness has shown and as our homeless neighbors know, decriminalization is a crucial step to getting people into homes and off the street. Constant harassment by police and by other community members only exacerbates the physical and mental health problems that some of our homeless neighbors face. Neighbors experiencing homelessness are still members of our community and should enjoy the same rights to public space that those of us who are housed enjoy. Homeless people should not be persecuted for "crimes of survival" like sitting or sleeping in public. Surveys (n = 565) conducted by the Western Regional Advocacy Project found that 88% of homeless people were harassed, cited, or arrested for sleeping, 83% for sitting, and 78% for standing around in Oregon. All of us living in Oregon would like to see fewer people sleeping on the street and the only way to truly see that happen is to better support those experiencing homelessness. Sweeping their housing and destroying their personal property only further exacerbate the issues that our communities face. Please pass the Right to Rest Act so that we can take a huge leap in supporting our homeless neighbors. Thank you so much for your time.

Sincerely,
Sarah Pearlman (North Portland resident)