

# Ecumenical Ministries *of* Oregon

Oregon Faith Movement

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## Testimony in Support of HB 2367 13 April 2021

Chair Bynum, Vice-Chairs Noble and Power, and members of the committee:

I am writing to express Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's support for HB 2367, the Right to Rest Act. HB 2367 addresses the current criminalization of homelessness and asserts that every individual, regardless of their housing status, deserves to be treated with compassion, dignity, and respect. We stand with other advocates in affirming that public safety includes the ability of those who experience homelessness to rest and exist in public spaces.

Working with over 150 congregations, organizations, and interfaith partners, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) strives to envision communities of faith in partnership creating a more peaceful, just, sustainable, and compassionate world. EMO works with and for Oregonians through direct service programming, dialogue, and advocacy. As leading advocates for Unaccompanied Houseless Youth (UHY), we unequivocally proclaim that individuals who experience homelessness must be affirmed and supported by their community, which includes the ability to rest, sit, or otherwise, outside, and in public spaces.

HB 2367 provides the opportunity to listen to our neighbors who are experiencing being unhoused first-hand. Their voices in this solution should be amplified and we as an organization recognize the importance of uplifting and listening to those most affected.

EMO rejects any mechanisms that allow the criminalization of homelessness and as such, affirms legislation such as HB 2367, which works to counteract historically discriminatory laws that target those experiencing homelessness. Further, EMO recognizes that criminalization is not the solution to our housing crisis and understands that these tactics in turn increase barriers for people.

As people of faith, we avow the inherent dignity of each individual person. We prioritize protection of safety and dignity for all people, including access to basic human needs, such as rest and respite. As stated in our shared social principles: "Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon recognizes the important role of government in maintaining a system of laws, regulations and public services,"<sup>1</sup> which includes ensuring housing supports for ALL.

We urge passage of HB 2367, and extend our gratitude to the individuals and organizations who helped craft the legislation. We thank you for your work and for your consideration of this essential legislation.

In partnership,

Olivia Asato  
Public Policy Associate  
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon

<sup>1</sup> Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon Statement of Social Principles  
[https://emoregon.org/pdfs/Public\\_Policy/EMO\\_Statement\\_of\\_Social\\_Principles\\_rev2012.pdf](https://emoregon.org/pdfs/Public_Policy/EMO_Statement_of_Social_Principles_rev2012.pdf)