

April 30, 2023

The Honorable Representative Dexter:

Chair Dexter and members of the committee, we are Don and Kelly Hodney and we are submitting written testimony in opposition to House Bill 3501.

First, we do not believe this bill met the first chamber deadlines and, therefore, we do not believe it should still be under consideration.

Second, we and most of your Oregon constituents are opposed to this bill because it is just another “defunding of police” bill in disguise. As stated by Rep. Chiachi in the bill, “Decriminalization of rest allows local governments to **redirect resources from local law enforcement activities** to activities that address the root causes of homelessness and poverty,” (emphasis added). As we have seen, the funds from defund-the-police bills are not effectively redirected and simply result in less local community safety and security and higher rates of homelessness and crime – Portland as a perfect example. Yes, another defunding police bill, which will have the same negative results as similar bills and agendas have had across our country. How do people justify insisting upon pushing their ideological agendas despite the outcome facts and data ?

Granted, there are some people who genuinely have fallen on hard times and need a helping hand. Those persons, however, are willing to work and will accept assistance because they are also willing to abide by the conditions of support that ensure a person moves from homelessness to self-sufficiency. The majority of Oregon’s homeless do not fall within this category. The majority of Oregon’s homeless have a drug addiction, and with Oregon’s decriminalization of drug possession and use, Oregon has become a haven for those who do not want to work, have a drug addiction, and do not want stop their drug habit. In fact, recent changes in Oregon laws encourage the continuance of a drug habit versus helping people out of their self-destructive choices. As a result, federal data shows Oregon homelessness increased 27 percent between 2020 and 2022, the fourth highest in the nation.

The shortage of housing is not why the majority of Oregon’s homeless choose to be homeless. People like to call it “progressive,” but it’s just plain Socialism. It’s Socialism to require the responsible, working people of the state to fund the rent or temporary housing location of those who choose to remain homeless in order divert the money that a responsible adult would use to pay rent to instead be used to support their drug habit. All taxpayers would have to fund their habit, immaturity, and irresponsibility through the funding of the state Capitol, county courthouses, city halls, parks, sidewalks, hazmat cleanup, etc. However, we and other personal property owners would also be forced to personally fund and host their lifestyle choice because HB 3501 includes not only public property areas, but also easements. we have a road that runs through and along our property as an easement. Because of that easement, HB 3501 would allow homeless to live on our property for as long as they want, dumping their human wastes and drug paraphernalia on our property, and we wouldn’t even be able to ask them to leave or clean up their filth because it would be considered harassment and **we would be fined instead of them**. What kind of upside-down equitable justice is that?

If passed, this bill would increase the already large segment of the population that is not equipped to and/or does not want to grow up and deal with adult responsibilities and life. This bill would simply make it even easier to escape from a life of responsibility. Someone else can work and pay for their

room, board, and drugs. Why work if the state will let me live wherever I want whenever I want and pay for my food, gas, and drugs every month?

In 2021, HB 3115 was passed despite great opposition to that bill, too. Kelly requested amendments to HB 3115 (2021) to protect waterways, which was ignored. Look what has been the result of HB 3115. More people choosing the homeless lifestyle, more homeless coming to Oregon, and more human wastes dumped into Oregon's waters. We have personally witnessed too many trailers and RVs backed up to the Willamette and Yamhill Rivers with their waste hoses dumping human wastes directly into the rivers. Like HB 3115 (2021), HB 3501 does not adequately protect Oregon's natural resources, including forests, woodlands, and waterways.

HB 3501 discriminates against the responsible, hardworking, law-abiding, tax-paying citizens of this state that haven't already left the state because of legislation like this. This bill makes the homeless the victims instead of the people who have to live with the very real aftermath of the poor decisions and behavior choices of the homeless. This bill would make parks, sidewalks, streets, and schools impossible to navigate and unsafe for people to traverse or attempt to use as designed.

Let Representative Chiachi, members of the committee that support this bill, and Governor Kotek prove their belief in this proposition by inviting the homeless to stay on or along their property to destroy it with their irresponsible choices, leaving their human wastes and spent hypodermic needles strewn across the property for children to play with. Let them first experience the realities of letting homeless people, the majority of which are simply drug-addicted persons who choose not to work and to continue in their addictions funded through state assistance, create fires and deal with the gun and knife violence. While they're doing that and realizing that giving a child what they ask for is often harmful to the child, we would ask that legislators with more wisdom would work on laws that have proven effectiveness in reducing homelessness by equipping people with the resources, tools, and coping skills they need to move beyond homelessness.

One city in California, another state that has created a homeless sanctuary attracting people from across the country and encouraging others to join their ranks, has a proven, successful approach that has eliminated the unsafe homeless camps in their city. Instead of making it easier for people to camp in their city, they enforce the laws prohibiting public camping and offer homeless shelter and other resources needed to leave the homeless lifestyle. Many accept and escape the harmful lifestyle. Those that choose to remain homeless move on to other Oregon and California cities that will assist them in remaining homeless.

Please do not pass HB 3501 and perpetuate instead of resolving homelessness. Do you want to leave your house or come to the state Capitol everyday having to navigate tents, RV, trailers, fires, needles, etc.? Our legislators' time would be better spent finding ways to treat the root causes of homelessness instead of trying to make it easier for them to remain in such a self-harming lifestyle. Instead, let's be the success story that helps people move out of homelessness to the positive, purposeful, meaningful life they should be given the chance to live.

Sincerely,

Don and Kelly Hodney