

To the Oregon House Committee On Judiciary:

This testimony is mine alone, and not representative of any organization or group I might be a part of.

I support the passage of HB 3115.

The Boise ruling makes clear it is not legal to criminalize homelessness or to assess fines for sitting, lying, sleeping, or keeping warm and dry outdoors on public property that is open to the general public. As long as behavior is "objectively reasonable," it is the government's responsibility to meet the needs of the homeless with resources and compassion. They deserve dignity and respect. This responsibility is even more critical during times of crisis, including the current Covid-19 pandemic. Many people have lost their jobs and homes because of circumstances beyond their control, left to fend for themselves by a government that largely supports only making the wealthy wealthier.

The US Constitution guarantees that persons experiencing homelessness should have the same rights and privileges as any other citizen, including access to temporary shelter and use of public spaces.

All over town – in every neighborhood, including my own in NE, my houseless neighbors sleep under overpasses, in parks, on sidewalks, next to substations, anywhere they can manage to survive, while countless high-end apartments go up, and housing values skyrocket.

The juxtaposition of fancy homes and new apartments with clusters of tent and cardboard camps all over town is dystopian at best, illustrating a society, and government, that has failed its people, and which can – and should – do better to help its people.

My neighbors who live outdoors to survive should be free from harassment via criminalization of their existence during these trying times.

Let's do better.

Sincerely,

Jon Nystrom, member of the League of Women Voters.