Oregon Right to Rest Act
Homeless Bill of Rights Campaign



This bill is about protecting the RIGHT TO REST, which is essential to everyone's health, safety, well-being and ability to function.

- Lack of sleep causes negative effects, including emotional distress, depression, mental illness, physical impairment, accidents, injuries, chronic health conditions, and forgetfulness. These issues are made worse when people don't have a permanent home, as they are often also cold, wet, and under extreme stress.
- People who are well rested have the time and energy to focus on accessing housing, healthcare, and community, instead of dealing with the negative health impacts of sleep deprivation.
- Criminalizing resting and sleeping in tents and structures, forces people to sleep in riskier spaces that are less visible to the public. Sleep and rest without adequate shelter from the elements, is devastating to mental health, physical health, and often proves fatal because people are less visible to those who could help if an issue arises and further from necessary resources.

Criminalization doesn't work. It doesn't reduce homelessness, instead it is an offensive and ineffective use of public resources. The Right to Rest Act will save Oregon money and provide clarity in our laws.

- The cost of criminalizing homelessness is not just the economic cost of our criminal justice system[1], but also the human cost of the trauma and stress it causes people who are unhoused, its disproportionate impact on oppressed communities, and the interference with the exercise of civil liberties and protection of civil rights.
- The costs of criminalizing homelessness are much greater than housing and services, particularly because criminalization traps people in a cycle (i.e. jail to streets and back again) that is difficult to escape. A better solution that *actually* works is permanent housing.
- Oregon has many laws and ordinances that criminalize homelessness. This has proven to be confusing, and has led to the violation of people's rights. The Right to Rest Act aims to create a statewide standard, where we are able to hold one another accountable.

This is a human rights issue and a critical moral issue.

- The Right to Rest Act prevents one kind of discrimination against houseless people in public spaces and affirms human rights to engage in life-sustaining activities, like sleeping and eating.
- The Right to Rest Act reflects values of empathy, compassion, and respect for humanity. The United Nations condemns these laws and finds criminalization of homelessness cruel and inhumane and recommends the abolishment of laws criminalizing homelessness at state and local levels.[2]
- This is an intersectional, social justice issue, as disproportionate numbers of houseless people are people of color[3], LGBTQ, veterans, people with disabilities, and belong to other oppressed communities.

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[1] *In a nine-city study completed in 2004, it was found that the cost of jail or prison was more expensive than the cost of shelter or supportive housing. In Seattle, the cost estimate was over $87/day for jail and over $90/day for prison, compared with $26/day for supportive housing or $17/day for shelter.* Lewin Group, Costs of Serving Homeless Individuals in Nine Cities, http://documents.csh.org/documents/ke/csh_lewin2004.PDF (2004).

[2] United Nations Human Rights Committee, National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, https://www.nlchp.org/INT_CCPR_COC_USA_16838_E.pdf (February 2017)

[3] State of Oregon, Homelessness in Oregon: 2015 Point in Time Count, https://www.oregon.gov/ohcs/pdfs/2015-Point-In-Time-Count-Summary.pdf (February 2017)