JB Carsen
Portland

Dear distinguished members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety,

My name is __JB Carson___, and I am resident of ___Portland__. I am urgently asking you to vote in support of LD 1478: An Act To Decriminalize Homelessness.

This critical legislation would ensure that homelessness is not criminalized and that trained mental health and substance use professionals would respond to encounters between law enforcement officers and people experiencing homelessness. Further, it would work to connect people with crisis services, emergency and transitional housing, and case management.

I have personal experience with being homeless. I was fortunate not to have been treated poorly, rather, I received the help that I needed from an old program at the YWCA called the Street Program. The program is now defunct due to lack of funding. The YWCA itself has died because of the same lack of funding, which is most unfortunate as it would still be helping homeless teens and young adults. I went on to work for the Seis program and others, devoting my employment to these sorts of programs to give back. Those sorts of programs for both teens and adults are still necessary to make sure the help is given, rather than to make the homeless feel like criminals or less than human. Please vote to stop this practice.

The criminalization of homelessness reinforces the marginalized status of people experiencing homelessness, disconnects people from the services that they need, and further traumatizes individuals by involving them in our punitive criminal justice system. Criminalizing someone experiencing homelessness dehumanizes that person and places blame on the individual, rather than the larger systems that continue to fail people who are seeking help.

For these reasons, I am asking you to vote in support of this much needed bill so that people are met with empathy and the resources they deserve, rather than criminalization and incarceration.

Thank you for your time,
__JB Carson___ (your name)
Sent from Mail for Windows 10