

Hello, my name is Henry and I am a caseworker in Maine for a homeless shelter. Our current laws put an already vulnerable population at greater risk. Anti loitering laws push people into unsafe areas and no one should be punished for exercising a necessary bodily function, especially when alternatives are sparse and holding it in can cause medical issues. The crux of this bill though is how we approach these situations. Those without homes are far more likely to interact with law enforcement and those with substance use disorders are more likely to be homeless. These are people who need help, both long term and short term. Bringing a mental health or substance use disorder professional will greatly increase the effectiveness of these interactions and can help bridge the gap of trust. Charges also create barriers that bar actual progress of individuals trying to access resources. Our current situation does a lot to punish, but very little to actually help individuals. Our laws should be based on helping our population and this bill is a great step towards that. Thank you for your time.