

Delia Knox
Cumberland

Hello members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety,

My name is Delia, and I'm from Cumberland, ME. I writing to ask you to vote in support of LD 1478: An Act To Decriminalize Homelessness.

This legislation would benefit so many people by ensuring that homelessness isn't criminalized, and that the correct professional responders, such as trained mental health and substance use professionals, respond to situations involving the homeless population. As I'm sure you know, homelessness has the potential to affect anyone, and those experiencing mental health issue or substance abuse are at a higher risk of becoming homeless, and I personally believe that they should be protected and helped, not criminalized due to unfortunate circumstance.

Criminalizing homelessness reinforces the ideas that homeless people are inherently bad and have done everything wrong in order to become homeless, even though that's not true in many cases. It also disconnects homeless from receiving proper healthcare and services that they need in order to survive. 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 or are predisposed to becoming homeless due to their pasts.

I believe that voting for this bill would be beneficial to a large variety of people and would de-stigmatize homelessness. It would help many more people than it would harm. All people, including those who so happens to be homeless should be empathized with, rather than being criminalized and incarcerated.

Thank you for your time, and I hope you take this into consideration.

-Delia Knox