

Rachel Scully
Resident

Dear distinguished members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety,
My name is Rachel Scully, and I am resident of York County. 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 was homeless for 1 year in Portland, it was difficult, people look at me differently, I was accused of doing crimes(like dumpster diving) that I never committed. I remember I was sleeping in my car at one point outside of Oxford Street shelter. I was told I could not go on their property, which posed a problem if I had to go to the bathroom, yet I wasn't able to drive my vehicle either, I would get in trouble with the law, yet I couldn't go in public cause again I would be in even more trouble with the law, so much so I would have to register as a sex offender. Although this is one of the lesser challenges that homeless people are presented with, it was a problem. Being Homeless is one of the hardest experiences I have been in my life and it is one of the most discouraging feeling as well. And I'm sure I am not only person that feels this way or faced harder challenges than I have. Our homeless community is full of good people, loving people and they are struggling to survive in life, being looked down on, accused of things they have done all because they are homeless, so they must be a criminal or charging them for a crime only discourages us more from trying to get back on our feet or to be productive in society! No one chooses to be homeless. It happens sometimes to people and it's a FIGHT, I mean a fight to rise above that situation. Decriminalizing and getting this community the help we need is a huge step forward to helping us heal and fight to get back what we once had.

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,
Rachel Scully
Sent from Mail for Windows 10