

Trisha Smith
Dover-Foxcroft

Dear distinguished members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety,
My name is Trisha, and I am resident of Dover-Foxcroft. I believe you should 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.

Since Reagan slashed the public housing budget in the 80's, homelessness has increased. Every recession and bank-bailout cycle makes it worse. Government withholds critical funding for healthcare, housing, food and water while enabling corporations and wealthy individuals to profit on misery and death, and pays police to keep the poor at bay.

The criminalization of homelessness reinforces the marginalized status of people experiencing homelessness, disconnects people from the services 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.

Supporting this bill will help ensure people are met with empathy and resources they deserve, rather than criminalization and incarceration. I urge you to support it.

Thank you,
Trisha