

Madeleine Waetherhead
Bayside

Dear Members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety,

My name is Madeleine Weatherhead, and I am a resident of Bayside. I am urgently asking you to vote in support of LD 1478: An Act To Decriminalize Homelessness.

This critical legislation would reduce the criminalization of houselessness by ensuring trained mental health and substance use professionals would respond to encounters between law enforcement officers and people experiencing houselessness to connect people with crisis services, emergency and transitional housing, and case management.

The criminalization of houselessness reinforces their marginalized status, disconnects people from the services that they need, and further traumatizes individuals by involving them in our punitive and expensive criminal justice system. Criminalizing someone experiencing houselessness 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 our community members are met with empathy and the resources they deserve, rather than criminalization and incarceration.

Thank you for your time,
Madeleine Weatherhead