

Madeleine Weatherhead
Portland

I am writing to urgently ask for your support to pass the act to decriminalize houselessness. By having mental health and substance use professionals respond to encounters between law enforcement and people who are houseless, people can be connected to needed services such as case management, emergency and transitional housing, and crisis services. These services are ultimately far less costly than our expensive and punitive criminal justice system.

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.