

HB 4054: The City of Portland cannot humanize the inherently inhumane practice of sweeps.

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The City's stated intention is to streamline the process of sweeps by removing red tape and "improving" the quality of sweeps that occur on ODOT property. The City claims they can humanely do something, which is at its heart, inhumane. This is offensive to Portland's unhoused community. Informed advocates for people who regularly face street evictions were left out of the decision-making process for HB 4054 and we wish to express our opposition to this bill.

Portland's lack of affordable and transitional housing combined with the City's use of sweeps means that here at Sisters of the Road, we talk to men, women and families negatively affected by sweeps every day. It is impossible to accurately describe how disrupting and harmful sweeps are. People routinely lose gear necessary for survival, documents and IDs needed to access lifesaving services, along with countless possessions which carry sentimental value. Courts around the country have begun to recognize that it is a violation of basic human rights to criminalize camping on public land when there are not alternatives for people to rest. **We are in a 'state of emergency'; this housing crisis is growing, and we have the opportunity to respond with innovation.**

**Sweeps will never be the solution. We do not support efforts to continue making sweeps more comfortable.** Sweeps and street evictions are an egregious and inhumane approach to a systemic issue. In an Oregon based survey of 565 people who were houseless, 65% did not know of a "safe and legal" place to sleep<sup>1</sup>. For the people of this City and this State who we meet in the Cafe, there is NOWHERE for them to go. We are frequently asked for advice on how to be invisible.

Our city claims to sweep only the "high" impact campers, and yet the newly organized and low-impact camp, Village of Hope, was recently swept; this is an example of our city's failure to live up to its own standards of compassion. This camp had the support of community activists and faith leaders and it was asking for the support of our City and Parks Department. Extending the city's reach to ODOT property will enable more harmful sweeps to be used on "low" impact campers. We cannot trust our City officials to respond with compassion. **We fear that this is simply an attempt to streamline and increase the efficiency of an inhumane practice, and is further bureaucratizing an already flawed system of engagement.**

Sisters of the Road believes in the dignity of all people, and HB 4054 is not leading us to a path of solutions. Instead, HB 4054 is absorbing the precious energy and capacity of our city away from innovative, community-led solutions into a trap of thinking that continues the culture of criminalization of people struggling to live outside. **Sisters of the Road does not support House Bill 4054. Instead, we wish you and the City of Portland would reach out to the houseless people in our cities and counties who are simply trying to survive, listen to the innovative and creative suggestions the community has to offer, and provide real solidarity and support.**

Sisters of the Road  
133 NW 6th Avenue, Portland, OR 97209  
503.222.5694 x119

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<sup>1</sup> <http://wraphome.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Oregon-SO-oregon-hbr-factsheet.pdf>