



February 24, 2020

Mayor Chuck Bennett & Salem City Council  
555 Liberty St SE RM 220  
Salem OR 97301

Dear Mayor Bennett and City Councilors,

As a group of non-profit and volunteer organizations working to support a safe and thriving community in Salem, we are once more submitting testimony to Salem City Council in opposition to the “sit-lie” ordinance. The increasing population of community members experiencing homelessness in Salem, is evidence of the current public safety and public health crisis we are facing. With the current state of lacking affordable housing, access to social services, use of restrooms or places to rest, we know that pushing people out of our public spaces and out of sight, is not a real solution.

Our agencies work to promote safe and healthy communities for people of all ages, races, disabilities and income-levels, starting with addressing basic needs like access to housing, education, social services and safe transportation options. This ordinance steepens the uphill battle that vulnerable communities already face in getting their basic needs met, and it pushes them further outside of the greater community. We submitted testimony in November 2019 in opposition to the original sit-lie ordinance, and we are still opposed to this type of action. We agree that City Council’s decision to ban camping has clearly worsened conditions in downtown, but we strongly disagree that a sit-lie ordinance would be a productive action towards addressing Salem’s homeless crisis.

We believe that public spaces are meant for all community members, including our most vulnerable who are living outdoors. We call on City Council to commit to finding real solutions for affordable housing and social services, and we look forward to supporting meaningful action. Thank you for your service to the Salem Community, and for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

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