

Dear Chair and Committee,

I am Mary Pendergast from the Sisters of Mercy and the Poor People's Campaign.

I write in favor of H7967, a bill strengthening the Homeless Bill of Rights. As a Sister of Mercy I have visited several encampments in the past few years. People give me items to bring: water, warm clothing, sleeping bags and special things requested by the residents to their outreach workers. Canned corned beef is a luxury item.

Of course there are people in encampments with significant problems. There are others, new to the system, the one paycheck away from catastrophe people, who landed there unexpectedly. I have seen that a leader emerges and a community of some care arises. Encampments are complex and the needs inside are enormous.

My point is that we, law enforcement, public works departments, mayors and governors need to remember that we are dealing with people. In all situations we need to act with respect. Unfortunately, that does not always happen.

This bill strengthens the Homeless Bill of Rights and strengthens policies and procedures for working with people who are without homes. I ask you to pass this legislation.

Sincerely,

Sister Mary Pendergast, RSM

Pawtucket