



VAL HOYLE  
Labor Commissioner

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## Oregon Labor Commissioner responds to reports of discrimination at Oregon hotels

Oregon's Bureau of Labor and Industries is hearing reports that Oregon hotels are denying access to people experiencing homelessness and to those they believe have COVID-19. Some establishments are stopping people from staying in their rooms, rejecting room payments made on an individual's behalf by advocacy organizations, or removing people from their premises.

"People experiencing homelessness and those who are sick deserve and have the right to access public businesses without discrimination," says statewide Labor Commissioner Val Hoyle. "Oregon law is very clear."

It's illegal for hotels to discriminate against Oregonians based on their race, gender, perceived or actual disability, or other protected characteristics. People also cannot be turned away solely because of the way they're paying for their room – source of income or payment type is protected by law.

Commissioner Hoyle is closely watching these developments and will use the power of her office to protect individuals from discrimination if necessary. Establishments could face civil penalties and damages for breaking anti-discrimination laws.

"It is unacceptable to stigmatize or criminalize people experiencing homelessness and those impacted by COVID-19," says Governor Kate Brown. "Every Oregonian—regardless of their circumstances—must remain safe during this unprecedented pandemic that affects us all. I support Commissioner Hoyle's efforts in protecting individuals from discrimination."

"Our most vulnerable community members need to be able to focus on staying healthy right now so Oregon can continue to flatten the curve. Unhoused individuals are especially vulnerable to COVID-19, the spread of which threatens our state's public health. Without a place to call home, the ability to frequently wash hands, practice good hygiene, and get restful sleep is threatened," says Hoyle.

"Some hotels are actually stepping up to provide temporary housing during this pandemic, and some are even opening their doors to serve as homeless shelters," says Hoyle. "Let them be an example to the rest of us of what we can do when we pull together."

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