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Sleep Deprivation and Homelessness

I'm here to do a book report on "Why We Sleep" by Matthew Walker, a sleep scientist and Director of the Center for Human Sleep Science at the UC Berkeley. I'm talking to each of you personally now. This is a book you should read, and have your family and friends read it. Because it will probably change how you live your life.

But as you read it, I want you to think about homeless people. The difficulties of getting to sleep in a shelter with hundreds of people all around you, coughing, snoring, shouting out in their dreams, getting up to go to the bathroom. I want you to think about homeless people sleeping in a shelter and being awakened at 4:30 or 5 am to pack up and leave the shelter in the dark and cold of a winter night.

I want you to think of homeless people living on the street being awakened by a cop coming by in his car to shine a very bright light on their camp, speaking over the loud speaker to get them up in the middle of the night in the cold to show ID, or telling them they have to pack up their gear and move along to nowhere. Or just as bad, saying - you have to leave now - I'll be back to make sure you're gone," and driving off. Who can go back to sleep after that?

If you read the book, Why We Sleep?, you will learn that:

- * routinely sleeping less than 6-7 hours a night demolishes your immune system
- * It more than doubles your risk of cancer
- * Insufficient sleep is a key lifestyle factor determining whether or not you will have Alzheimer's disease
- * Inadequate sleep - even moderate reductions for just one week - disrupts blood sugar levels so profoundly that you would be classified as pre-diabetic.
- * Short sleeping increases the likelihood of your coronary arteries becoming blocked and brittle, leading toward cardiovascular disease, stroke and congestive heart failure
- * Sleep disruption contributes to all major psychiatric conditions, including depression, anxiety and suicide.
- * Drowsy driving is the cause of hundreds of thousands of traffic accidents and fatalities.
- * So far, I'm only on page 5 of the book.

* In fact, “no facet of the human body is spared the crippling, noxious harm of sleep loss.” P. 133

So read this book, and in addition, think of all that we are doing - camping bans, police sweeps, police contacts, etc. - that prevent the homeless from getting enough sleep. Please vote yes on House Bill 1067.

Thank you.

