

From: [Annie Mack](#)
To: [Clerk General](#)
Subject: [User Approved] Safety and Livability concerns re: Drug, crime, and homeless crisis in Portland
Date: Monday, November 8, 2021 7:24:13 AM

Hi there,

I am a physician and mother of 2 children ages 7 and 10 yrs old. My children have grown up in Portland and this is all they know. In the beginning, we used to go to the Laurelhurst Park Playground and see other neighbors and community members there. However, since the City has allowed camping and rampant drug use to overrun this park and Playground, we started seeing syringes and aggressive campers and have since stopped going for fear of the kids getting stuck by a used syringe or our family getting hurt by someone under the influence of hard drugs or experiencing a mental health crisis. Syringes are seen daily by community members at Laurelhurst Park, including the playground. However, the syringes are not limited to the playground. We live a few blocks away and have seen them on the street in front of our house and at Laurelhurst Elementary school where someone was actively using drugs with multiple leftover used syringes and had soda bottles filled with a dark brown substance that looked like stool. We have witnessed aggressive behaviors by campers, middle of the night ringing of our doorbell by an agitated woman, constant thefts and car break ins in our neighborhood including a middle of the night attempted break in by a Laurelhurst Park camper into our neighbors' home who have 4 young children. There have been guns pulled on workers at the Park. There was a report of a child getting stuck by a needle on the playground. There has been a camper openly masturbating on the playground multiple times. Driving around Portland, my children constantly bear witness to constant camps, trash, graffiti, and at times, inappropriate adult behavior. This is not the same city we chose to live in 13 yrs ago. Had we anticipated any of this, we would not have chosen to live here. And now, we have community roots here which makes it hard to leave. However, the constant reminders to our children to watch out for needles on playgrounds (we avoid Laurelhurst Park playground but as the City is well aware, this problem is so rampant and widespread now that it is impossible to feel safe in any playground in Portland), the feeling that if we forget to lock a door at night or set an alarm might mean an intruder breaks in and harms us, the feeling of constantly having to be vigilant walking around Portland has dramatically affected livability and safety. My daughter is getting older and would like to be able to walk to our neighborhood school with friends in the coming years. While I want her to gain that independence, I also fear for her safety given the above mentioned concerns. Hence, I am strongly considering moving my family out of Multnomah County within the next year which would be a huge relief to myself and my husband but a huge disappointment for the kids to have to start at a new school and find new friends. However, while one family who leaves the city and county may not matter much to City Council, we would be amongst a growing trend of families leaving who may have children they are trying to protect, work hard at jobs they love, dutifully pay their taxes (some of the highest, if not the highest in the country), and follow the rules and laws of society.

I am requesting that Portland officials take a long hard look at the changes in policy and resultant chaos that have occurred since: camping in public places has been allowed in Portland, since possession of small amounts of hard drugs has been decriminalized in Portland, since Portland Police staff has been significantly cut such that it is impossible to maintain public safety. Homicides are through the roof. The Defund the Police decision was significantly flawed. No one has benefited from this and in fact, many have been harmed from the murdered citizens in Portland, to women in domestic violence situations, to children suffering from child abuse. Reforming the police and holding police officers accountable is appropriate but cutting funding and staffing makes that impossible. Reform takes resources, training, staff, money. It feels like drug addicts and criminals are now running the city rather than our elected officials. It is long overdue time to step up and make those hard choices and decisions as these problems have turned into a tsunami and will only continue to worsen in an accelerated fashion.

I am requesting

- 1) The Behavioral Health Units be a 24/7 team that can address situations in the middle of the night as well as during the daytime. Yes, this will take more money but our taxes have increased astronomically and there is federal money. If it is prioritized in the budget, it can be done
- 2) Fund detox centers and mental health hospitals to help those who can no longer help themselves. This is not just

an issue of finding housing for the homeless or Safe Rest Villages (though I think these are great and necessary and important but only a small piece of the puzzle). Many citizens are so addicted to drugs and so used to breaking all the rules without ANY consequences, that they have no desire to be part of a community with rules. Please ensure there are consequences to aggressive and criminal behavior including mandatory admissions to detox facilities and mental health hospitals in those who are mentally incompetent.

3) Have another vote to undo the measure that does not penalize possessing small amounts of illegal drugs.

4) Please fund and adequately staff a police force that can handle the size of a city like Portland. This should be coupled with police reform (and realize this takes \$\$ to train police to recognize unconscious bias, to learn how to respond in a crises situation in the safest manner possible to all parties involved) and accountability.

5) Please make camping on and adjacent to schools, playgrounds, and homes illegal and ACTUALLY enforce it! That should be the first and most immediate move. Future moves should focus on making public camping illegal everywhere by ensuring there are adequate sanctioned camping sites, detox, mental health facilities and providers .

I am looking for real change to be made within the next year with a visible elimination of camping in and adjacent to playgrounds and schools, reduction in homicides, increase in police force funding and #s of officers in Portland.

I ask that you please not use my name in this testimony for fear of my privacy and my families' safety. If you can't submit this without attaching my name then don't.

Thank you,
Annie Mack, MD