

**From:** [Andy Miller](#)  
**To:** [Council Clerk – Testimony](#)  
**Cc:** [Wheeler, Ted](#); [Hardesty, Jo Ann](#); [Rubio, Carmen](#); [Ryan, Dan](#); [Commissioner Mapps](#); [Mapps, Mingus](#); [Weir, Jill](#) ([Commissioner Mapps](#)); [Bond, Mark](#); ["Nicole Hayden"](#); ["Alex Zielinski"](#); [Callahan, Shannon](#); [Jolin, Marc](#); [Liam Frost](#)  
**Subject:** City-County Supplemental Budget  
**Date:** Wednesday, November 10, 2021 12:17:58 PM

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On behalf of Human Solutions, your community partner in East Portland countering the forces causing homelessness and poverty in our community, I offer the following testimony with respect to the Supplemental Budget – “The BmP” = before City Council this afternoon. I unfortunately am not able to attend the hearing and testify in person.

Mayor Wheeler and Commissioners:

I want to begin by thanking you for dedicating the resources proposed to our joint struggle to end the housing crisis causing homelessness and profound housing insecurity across our beloved City and Region. Years of under-investment in affordable housing and decades of worsening income inequality are primary causes of our current crisis, so your dedication of these resources that derive from revenue streams performing better than projected indicates your efforts to rebalance our investments in a way that prioritizes this crisis – thank you. I am also deeply appreciative of what appears as item 7 in the documents describing these investments – direct investments in the staff providing the essential services needed to reach those who experience the impacts of this crisis and to provide them with safety and a pathway back into the housing our system failed to adequately provide them. While the investment is couched in language focused on a very current need to attract and retain a workforce and morale levels needed to provide these services effectively, we hope you will sustain these commitments and broaden them to all publicly-funded human services so that contractors providing human services that advance the City’s goals and objectives can pay every worker the living wage they deserve. As we have shared with you, too many members of our workforce across the broad spectrum of human services – from violence reduction services to workforce development and housing assistance – simply cannot afford the cost of living in our region. And like so many of our challenges, this one disproportionately impacts workers who identify as BIPOC. Racial justice demands a living wage for all human service workers – something we hope you will continue to commit resource towards.

While we are appreciative that you have proposed focusing these investments of one-time resources on our homeless crisis generally, one category of potential investments is noticeably missing from this proposal – housing itself, and in particular the acquisition and/or development of properties like motels or vacant/underutilized apartments or office buildings that can be quickly leveraged into a [housing first](#) model of housing that has proven so successful [nationally](#) and [internationally](#). This could happen via acquisition, master leasing, actual development or some creative combination of those strategies. While the Biden Administration is [calling on Cities to end the unproductive and inhumane sweeping away of homeless encampments and to stop expanding short-term interventions like shelters](#) in favor of the rapid development of housing first models, this budget’s proposed allocations appear to be taking our community in the opposite direction – focused more on managing the problem of homelessness than on ending it. With the Portland Housing Bureau recently concluding a procurement process for our next generation of housing commitments, we can only imagine there were good proposals that went unfunded. Might not some of these one-

time resources and those made possible by ARPA be dedicated directly to the rapid development of housing opportunities for people living on our streets? We speak so often that only housing can truly and permanently end homelessness – shouldn't our resource investments then be urgently focused on the creation of actual housing?

While I appreciate that we cannot end this crisis overnight and that some degree of “managing it” in real time is essential, the BmP and ARPA investments will be missed opportunities to super-charge our commitment to housing – especially housing first models - as the primary solution if the bulk of those investments go to short-term interventions that do not actually end homelessness by aligning with proven best-practice strategies now underway in communities across the country.

Homelessness is the result of a failed housing system – one that was never built to house all of our people. Unless and until we invest directly in systems change – not only in the creation of more housing but in the type of housing that directly aligns with the needs, hopes, desires and preferences of those left unhoused by our current system – we cannot hope to end this crisis.

Traditional housing development resources like tax credits and bonds do not align well with the creation of this type of housing – so we need more flexible general fund or ARPA dollars to work more quickly and creatively in the housing space to create the homes we need – deeply affordable and unconditionally available to those facing the greatest barriers in the conventional systems.

While it will take more resources than are currently within our control, each investment we make should model our primary theory of change – that only housing can end homelessness. I do not see that modelled here or with our proposed investment of ARPA funds and hope to see further movement that strengthens our ability to deliver the homes that every person experiencing the impacts of this crisis needs and wants.

Respectfully,

*Andy*  
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***Pronouns: He/Him/His***