

Paxton Rothwell

#267237 | March 11, 2021

Testimony to **Portland City Council** on the **Shelter to Housing Continuum Project, Recommended Draft**

Dear Commissioners, I strongly support you passing the Shelter to Housing Continuum (S2HC). Additionally, I support passing all of the amendments recommended by the group Portland: Neighbors Welcome. I especially believe sanctioned camps need to be considered for some open space zones (such as the roundabouts at the Morrison Bridge and the Ross Island Bridge) because these areas are easily serviced and are not natural habitats or parks. It seems ridiculous to exclude potential sites from this policy before the effects of it are even seen. The status quo does not work. Portland is filled with unsanctioned camps littered with needles, trash, and located in potentially dangerous places. These camps line the sidewalks of Old Town/Chinatown and make housed Portlanders and tourists alike feel severely uncomfortable in their presence. My feeling of unwelcomeness on my City streets paired with trash heaps and burned out cars makes me feel like I am living in a dystopian hellscape. Unsanctioned camps paired with a mass call to end inhumane sweeps has left the City stuck and facing massive critique from business owners. The City's efforts thus far have absolutely not worked and I urge you to take that deeply into consideration as you read staunch anti-houseless rhetoric from the opponents of S2HC. While some are convinced otherwise - as long as 0.1% of the population hoards well over 50% of the wealth, America will suffer with inadequate infrastructure, healthcare, education, and a federal government that doesn't care to govern for the people. We will continue to see a growing number of our fellow citizens living in tents in every major city in this country. In the climb to the top of the capitalist ladder, the person at the top must push down everyone else below them - drowning many in debt and homelessness. So, until we break free of the chains this economic ideology has put around our wrists, it is our duty to provide services to our houseless neighbors. It is time to be compassionate without the fear that someone will take advantage of it. Simply put, S2HC is zoning for the very poor. These very poor folks are our houseless neighbors that society has otherwise left behind. Our neighbors need a stable place to call home, even if that means they are living in a tent village. The stigma associated with being houseless is self-perpetuating: most say they drain society, are addicted to drugs, and should take care of themselves. No! As a City it is time to say 'enough is enough' and actually make it easier for those who want to help to do so. And the only way to end this stigma is to treat the houseless as humans who deserve a stable place to call home as they move toward more permanent housing options. The sweeps, housing state of emergency, and the COVID sanctioned camps were a great way to kick the can down the road until we thought of a better solution. S2HC is the best solution for the time we are in and we cannot afford to waste another minute letting our neighbors

die on the streets as we turn a blind eye. I urge you to pass this transformative zoning change to expand what we as a City believe the term 'housing' means. Stable housing is a human right and it's time to create a legal mechanism to treat it as such. Sincerely, Paxton Rothwell An Organizer with Sunrise PDX

Testimony is presented without formatting.