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#267299 | March 14, 2021

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

To Mayor Ted Wheeler and City Council Members: I am writing with grave concerns about the language of part of the proposal of Shelter to Housing Continuum (S2HC). The language involves the inclusion of "Open Space Zones" for consideration of either temporary or permanent houseless shelters. First of all I want to remind Council Members of Charlie Hales's enactment of "temporary, emergency" housing of houseless people on sidewalks and parking strips. The emergency declaration was supposed to allow houseless people to camp on the sidewalks from 9 p.m. to 7 a. m. After a few months (before its original end date, I believe) this declaration was cancelled because houseless people did not just camp during those hours, but rather set up permanent camps in those locations. Of course, they did, because they had no other place to stay during the day and it was extremely difficult to set up and remove their tents every day. However, after this declaration was cancelled, the houseless people remained on the sidewalks because they had no other place to go. So cancelling the declaration did not end the camping. My point being that my concern is that this will become permanent. This proposal, if passed, would forever alter the character and use of our beloved parks, and change the City of Portland, not for the better. The proposal seems to assume that there is no other land for the houseless people to reside. However, that is not true. According to a BPS staff report to the Planning and Sustainability Commission (PSC) there is plenty of land to meet the City's housing needs for everyone. The constraint involves the affordability of the land and the cost of construction and operations of shelters. Therefore money should be put into the building of units for houseless people. Citizens just passed the tax on the top 1% to fund a solution for houseless people, even though our local governments still do not have a plan as to how to spend the money. Here is a plan. Allowing shelters in public open spaces removes these spaces for their intended use by the general population for fresh air, exercise, play, gatherings, etc. Especially during the pandemic, but even before that, tenants who have no outdoor space, used the parks for their yards. Access to these special places is important for everyone, not just a select few. Laurelhurst Park is a prime example of how houseless camping is not compatible to the day use for which the parks were created. Garbage, excrement, needles, harassment (by and of the houseless people) were overwhelming. The City did little to mitigate these concerns, and camping was and is illegal there. So what would happen if it were legal? The City did not provide basic needs of daily living for these camps: bathrooms, showers, trash removal, law enforcement, etc. And this proposal does not require that they do if this passes. The environmental disaster this would create would do irreparable harm. The houseless crisis in Portland is not a temporary situation, with a temporary fix. It is ongoing and

manmade and it is serious. But this does not fall into the "emergency" category with an end in sight. This must fall into its own category, not an emergency, like an earthquake, that has a finite end. This is a continuing crisis. Therefore opening up our parks and golf courses (which appear to be covered under this language) for "temporary shelter" would in fact not be temporary at all (See Charlie Hales sidewalk camping above). Even if the ordinance was later amended to remove "open spaces", the camps would still be there and there would be great difficulty, expense and harm to the campers to remove these camps. To restore the parks and natural trails to their intended purpose would be extraordinary. You cannot put the genie back in the bottle. Please remove the Open Space Zone from consideration as either temporary or permanent houseless shelters. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Testimony is presented without formatting.