

# Melinda Jackson

**#267326 | March 14, 2021**

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

Greetings: I would like to commend the creative, far-thinking work of the Shelter to Housing Continuum Project. Portland desperately needs code changes and funding to create a variety of housing opportunities for our poorest residents. I am proud to live in a city where voters supported funding to improve the lives of the thousands of fellow citizens who can't afford roofs over their heads. Our poorest citizens must not be ignored. Changes in city code will help make many crucial improvements possible. Portland voters also generously supported both parks and increased acquisition of Open Spaces. I see all walks of life benefitting from the beauty and services provided by our Portland Parks. We use our parks for their playgrounds, outdoor sports, for picnicking, for toilets, for day camps, for free lunch distribution, for childcare, and for a wide variety of affordable classes in community centers. Pools and fitness centers are very heavily used by all ages and demographic groups. Many people who live in apartments in congested areas rely on parks and public natural spaces for outdoor access. I am not in favor of allowing camping in Portland Parks even temporarily. Portlanders voted to expand our public holdings of Open Spaces. For years the city has supported citizens in cleaning up and re-naturalizing sensitive wild areas. It has been a priority for Portlanders. Our string of green spaces affords wildlife corridors and clean streams, as well as opportunities for walking, finding quiet, and observing. It is a reason to love living in this city. I am not in favor of allowing even temporary encampments in public wild areas. Encampments degrade sensitive natural areas and they discourage broad use of these public sanctuaries. It is my understanding that the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability has determined there is enough vacant and underutilized land available in our city to provide housing and camping opportunities for our houseless population without putting inappropriate pressure on our parks and Open Spaces. Permitting camping in parks and wild areas must not be sanctioned temporarily. Although I believe the work of the committee and changes in zoning as well as increased funding will improve housing availability to thousands of our poorest citizens, there is not really a definitive end to houselessness in sight. It is not appropriate or fair for our parks and wild Open Spaces to be used for camping during this crisis that may have no end. Thank you, Melinda Jackson

Testimony is presented without formatting.