

Rich Rainbolt

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

Please see attached PDF To allow camping and therefore homeless encampments in all city parks is a short-term attempt to fix a long-term problem. I urge that this short-term attempt is not made, and that homelessness is not hidden or swept to another area, but that it remains a visible reminder that we are not dealing with the issues that cause people to lose their homes. The cost of opening the parks to camping would be that they will not be used for relaxation and play by the neighbors, and there is a higher risk of fires and sanitation issues. I urge the city to deal with the real issues and not make grand, ineffective gestures to solve complex problems. The long-term solutions are expensive, and worth the money. Our society treats homelessness as a crime rather than a condition. There can be any number of reasons as to why someone ends up without a place to live, including sudden job loss or family breakdown, severe substance abuse, or mental health problems. The solution has been found and implemented in other cities and countries. And, in Portland we have a working example of how to approach the issue of homelessness. The organization “Portland Homeless Family Solutions” www.pdxhfs.org has a well-studied and effective process to help people who are in danger of and who are without a home. As a society we must first recognize the trauma caused by losing one’s home, and the trauma of the events leading up to the loss of one’s home. This means doing what it takes and paying the price to get homeless people into secure housing, then, after they are housed, work to solve the issues that resulted in their homelessness. Some may object to the idea that people should receive housing before having sorted out the issues that lead to them being without a place to live. I think we can all agree, it is much more difficult to solve problems without having secure housing. For example, substance abuse can be increased by trying to get through the trauma and therefore prevents one from doing what it takes to get out of the situation. To address the high rate of homelessness, Portland needs to approach it with a trauma-informed, culturally competent suite of services. We need to expand programs like Portland Homeless Family Solutions by funding them and other Trauma-Informed organizations. Specifically, we need to have:

- Public-funded housing for those without a home.
- Public-funded support for families. This will address the causes of their homelessness and give support to find a permanent home. (e.g. Mental Health, Housing Advice, Debt Counseling, etc.).
- Affordable Housing solutions -- that remain affordable. This can be achieved through a minimum wage, or a minimum income, which is fixed to the average cost of housing. Or, it could be achieved through continued public subsidized building and purchasing of market priced homes. It is all very expensive, but less expensive than not dealing with the issue. As people have secure housing they contribute to the work and commerce of

Portland. People with homes are more vested in their communities which results in reduced crime and higher property values.

Testimony is presented without formatting.