

Diane Luck

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

I strongly oppose allowing "temporary" shelters in public parks, church parking lots and vacant lots especially because THEY DO NOT INCLUDE A STRICTLY ENFORCED NO TOLERANCE POLICY FOR ILLEGAL DRUGS AND CRIME . There isn't even a mention of illegal drugs and crime. The proposal states that shelters in parks would be for "no more than 180 days". Then what? Nowhere in the proposal do I see any steps to address the illegal drug problems that very often accompany homelessness, have caused a rapid rise in crime and violence in Portland, and have made our once beautiful, safe city almost unlivable. If these proposals do not adopt a no tolerance drug use policy, the "shelters" will become no more than an expansion of the nearly intolerable situation in our city caused by people using illegal drugs. More and more responsible, tax paying citizens are leaving Portland because they no longer feel safe, are tired of being robbed, vandalized and/or physically harmed or threatened. If our city continues on this path, it will have far fewer funds to solve problems or support our city structure because respectable people will simply leave. Rhode Island adopted a strict no tolerance drug and crime program and at the same time offered expanded support services for those who are willing to choose rehab. The program is working! As in about 85% success rate. And they are spending less money than we spend cleaning up after and enabling drug users in our city. We should learn a lesson from them. How many neighborhoods do we have to destroy to learn that we MUST address Portland's drug problem with workable solutions if we want permanent solutions to homelessness? We need to redraft the proposal to address ways to help those brought to homelessness by the pandemic or other unavoidable circumstances, and are illegal drug free and law abiding citizens. And we need to adopt a no tolerance of illegal drugs policy with a choice of jail or rehab for offenders. For those who feel the no tolerance drug policy is "harsh" or "heartless", I ask you: Would you rather give someone an opportunity to choose rehab with plenty of support (vs. jail) or would you rather see them die a miserable death on the streets as an addict?

Testimony is presented without formatting.