

Catherine Willett

#278049 | March 16, 2021

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

I was born and raised in Portland in a family where service and charity were crucial components of being a citizen and neighbor. But, as the number of unhoused or insufficiently housed people in Portland grows, it is beyond clear that services provided by individuals and local community groups is not enough. A system-wide approach based on social justice and common humanity is needed. I have been dismayed to see how Portland residents, especially those new to this city, have responded to the current attempts by City of Portland employees to provide basic services, like emergency shelters and bathrooms. Because these attempts have not had as much official support and teeth, it has been easy for a small group of vocal people to control whether another Portland resident has access to what they need for a good life. Without a comprehensive, flexible and adaptable approach to supports for the unhoused, some Portland residents can feel overwhelmed or unsure of what can be done to help and may tacitly agree to punitive, unhelpful treatment of their unhoused neighbors, which has led to any number of conflicts and ruined Port-a-Potties. Portland residents impacted by the current economic crises or by life events, trauma or substance usage are still our neighbors and deserving of support, and how we treat them is a reflection of how much we truly care about this city. The Shelter to Housing Continuum Project is our best bet for providing assistance to those who need it and a clear and caring plan for how neighbors from different backgrounds and with different struggles can co-exist together.

Testimony is presented without formatting.