

David Smith

#278087 | March 16, 2021

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

Dear City Councilors, I am writing to you to ask that you oppose the proposal before you which would allow for homeless encampments on public parks and golf courses as an idea to solve the homeless crisis. Public parks and other community places are for the benefit of all persons but are designed for a specific reason and allowing camping in our parks and greenspace is not the answer to this problem. In my opinion it will only add to the problem, inviting more homelessness in the area and making it worse to deal with in the future. The graffiti, litter and garbage alone left behind by current encampments is illegal, and I would imagine costly (see ORS 164.805). If these encampments are allowed to continue, or encouraged, you are adding to the problem on multiple fronts. 1) you are not addressing the core problem to homelessness in the Portland metro area. Those being lack of shelter beds and affordable rent or housing. 2) You are taking action which will invite more homelessness to the Portland metro area with lax rules increasing the garbage related health concerns and lack of consequences or accountability 3) This will eventually overrun the intended use of our parks and greenspaces, lead to conflict between those who use the parks for the intended use against those who view it as their home. And, finally, the large scale illegal dumping will only diminish the livability of Portland and prove to be very costly to restore and clean up. I understand this is a serious and complex issue. I have empathy for those within our community who are homeless. There are many reasons for it; mental health issues, addiction, temporary circumstances and in some cases a chosen lifestyle. Programs have been funded to assist people in these circumstances and more is likely needed. But expanding and normalizing encampments is not the best use of our parks and greenspaces when you have resources and funding to do better and more impactful progress. Please vote NO and do not change zoning rules and law to allow more encampments in our city.

Testimony is presented without formatting.