

MaryJo Monroe

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

I'm not very good at expressing myself, so I am copying in the testimony of one of my neighbors, who puts things much better than I do. I agree with him completely. I believe saying NO is the most caring position. See why: As a long time advocate of making safe and adequate housing and shelter available to everybody, and as a professional in mental health, as well as addictions, I am strongly AGAINST the proposal to use parks for homeless shelters. Except in case of a community emergency such as earthquakes. Two very important issues need to be equally considered. ONE: Parks, used as parks, play a very important role in the health and well being of a community, town, city, state, country. Communities and people need parks to stay parks. This is for everyone's well being in life. TWO: A comprehensive solution to homelessness requires both supplying the necessary resources to the homeless and also NOT allowing sleeping, camping, cooking, squatting, living anywhere and everywhere, such that people are FORCED into using the resources that are made available as part of the plan. The necessary resources include safe secure pleasant sleeping and living quarters, mental health services, addiction services, social work services, medical care, jobs, jobs training, financial care, education, etc. The community, corporations, public agencies need to figure out how to provide these necessary services instead of "allowing" people to camp and live almost anywhere, just because they don't want to provide and pay for the services. The LOVING and kind solution..... TOUGH LOVE, is to both prohibit the living on the streets and parks and provide good alternatives to that. It is not loving and caring to "allow" living on the streets so the services aren't provided. You tell a person: "No, you can't sleep on the bench or sidewalk., etc.... However, here is a good nice safe place you can stay. Here is mental health, here is addiction treatment, here is job, here is job training..... etc..... Parks are not a substitute for what needs to be done. Shaming people about not giving up the parks is a manipulation and running away from the real solutions. We need public and corporate solutions so that the parks are NOT needed or allowed to be living areas. Parks should not be allowed to be dumping grounds. We need them as PARKS. There are solutions. Will we create them? Or pretend we really care, when we don't? Dr. David Illig

Testimony is presented without formatting.